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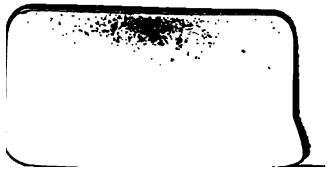
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The Specialist

By A. M. IRVINE

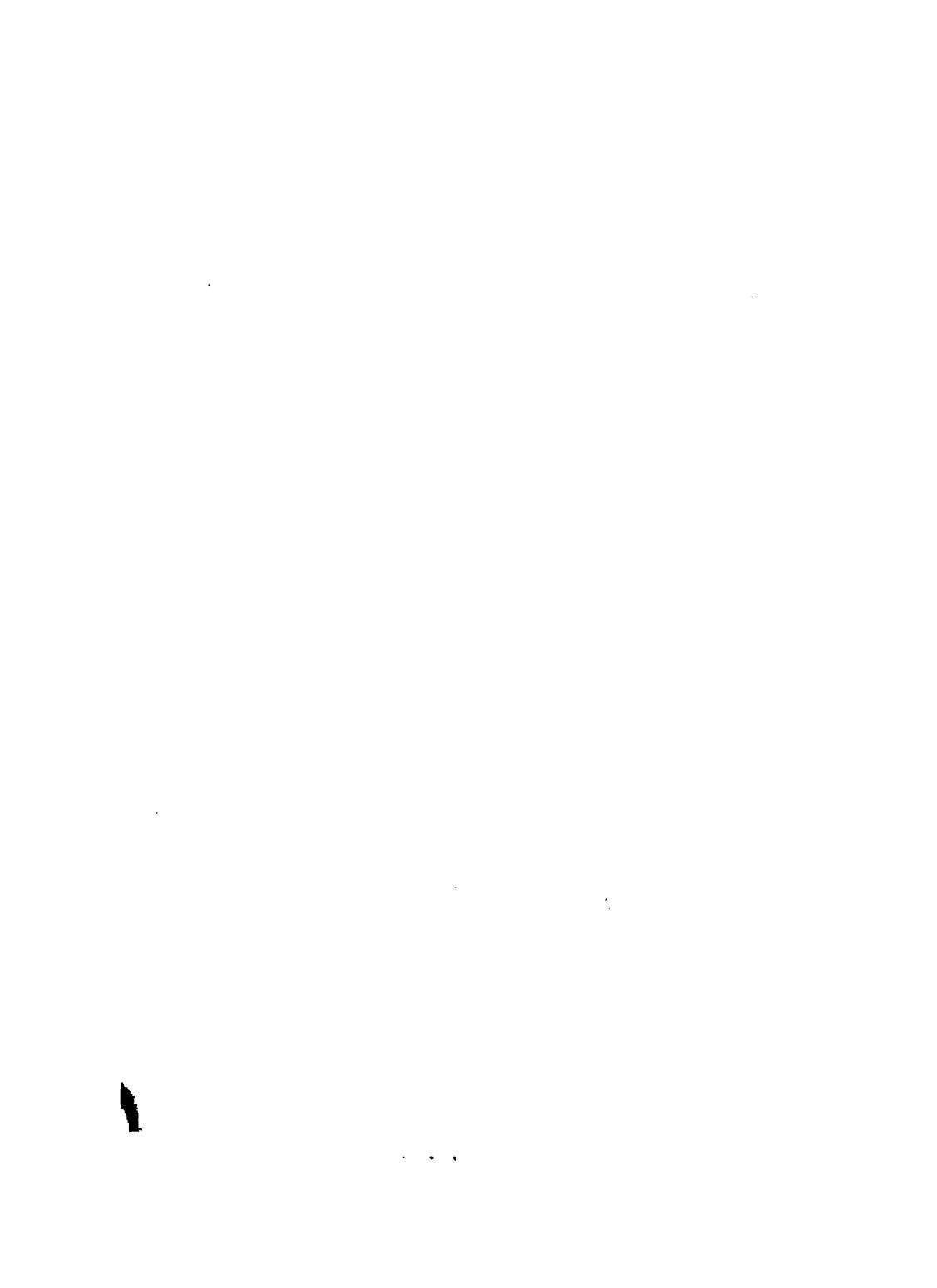


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The Specialist



THE SPECIALIST

A Novel

By
A. M. IRVINE

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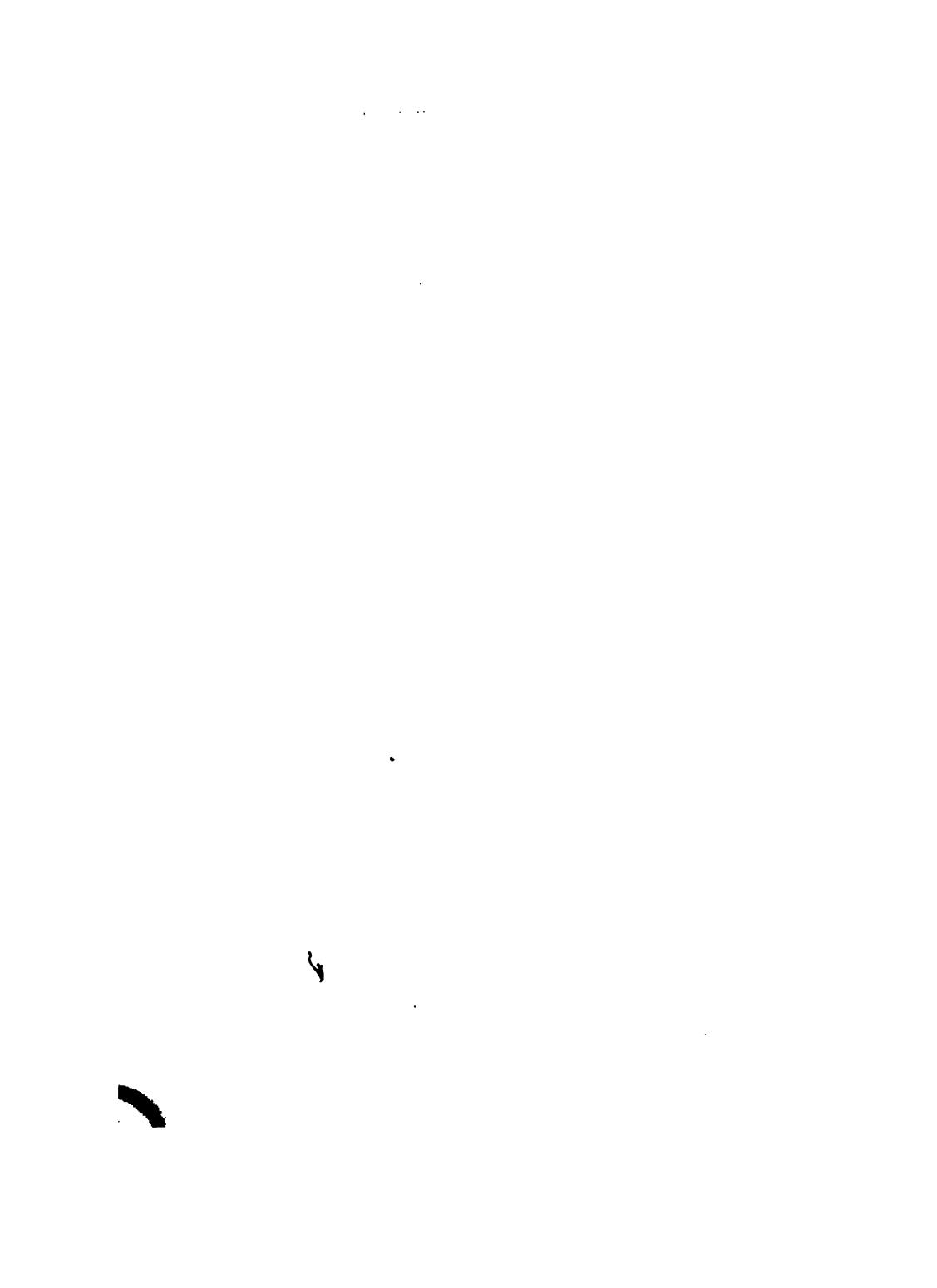
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PART I
THE PATIENTS OF DONVERY



THE SPECIALIST

CHAPTER I—*The Corridor*

THROUGH the long corridor leading to Dr. Deladoey's consulting rooms the echo of his footsteps passed. Even after the sharp shutting of his door he seemed in evidence outside, until the confusion of other hurrying footsteps awakened echoes of a different character, and the Hotel became alive with the usual rush to get first into the Salle d'Attente, by which the patients of Donverry tried to avoid the weary waiting hour that late-comers were doomed to endure before they went through the more trying ordeal of the Treatment. The competition to secure an early seat was always keen, for it was well known in the Hotel that towards the end of the morning Dr. Deladoey's manner became more and more unpleasant, and most of his patients preferred to scramble for their turn rather than run the risk of facing him after twelve o'clock.

The room was filling fast, and as each victim

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entered, he counted the number already there before him, and took a seat with an air of resignation. One of these, having brought his hat in with him, and placed it carefully on a chair, looked round defiantly, and, muttering that he had forgotten something, wheeled round and left the room. The hat, remaining on his seat, was supposed to guard it for him and save him from some of those long moments in which one loses nerve. He was the inventor of this ruse, and had earned for himself the title of Circulator, it being a standard joke against him that by whichever way he disappeared he invariably returned from the opposite direction. Such was his haste this morning that in the passage outside he came into collision with another man, who was walking with bent head towards the proper destination of every visitor here.

“Pardon, pardon,” gasped the Circulator—“in a hurry—forgotten something!”

The young author whom he had jostled looked up mechanically, but was buried too deep in thought to do more than stupidly mutter, “Why?” —a question that the Circulator never answered, being already at the other end of the corridor.

This was not a good place for thought. Scarcely had the Circulator disappeared than the young author was roused again by the sound of scamp-

The Corridor

ering, and stepped out of the way barely in time to avoid another collision, with a boy and girl, making a mad rush for the door of the Salle d'Attente.

The girl, whose dignity had not arrived with her new, long dresses, seized the handle first, and valiantly fought for it.

“Je suis *plus premier* que vous!” she screamed.

“Not so, Mees Tempest,” shrieked the French boy, “I am more first than Mademoiselle, your aunt.”

“No—no, you aren’t, Gustave Foucou; I am taking her seat for her, because she’s chattering to Mrs. Courtenay, and, besides, I’ve never been here before, and I can’t wait, and I won’t, and I was first. Wasn’t I?” she exclaimed, appealing to the young author, and still protecting the handle from her enemy.

“It is evident that you were,” he answered, and laughed. At an impressive moment in his life (perhaps because of its sharp contrast with this ridiculous quarrel) he was irresistibly tickled.

“There’s Mr. Derwent coming; he’ll be on my side, too,” cried little May Tempest. “Mr. Derwent, Mr. Derwent, is Gustave to go in before me, when I’ve got the handle?” Her voice travelled piercingly down the corridor to an approaching friend.

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“The thing is impossible,” returned this second champion, as he sauntered up. “No one can get in while you keep the handle.” Then he turned to the discomfited French boy, adding in an audible aside, “It is worth while to be second, Gustave, for then you can hear her crying, while, if you went in before her, she would hear you.”

This line of argument appealed to Gustave Foucou, since with the bravest intentions in the world, his howl of anguish sometimes travelled through the communicating door between the Salle d'Attente and the Salle de Consultation, causing unkind mirth amongst his fellow-sufferers, and he stepped back sulkily to let May pass in first.

“Are you before me, McGregor?” asked Mr. Derwent.

“I’m not going in just yet,” returned the young author, rather indistinctly, and he took no notice of the American’s quizzical remark that it was quite refreshing to discover someone in no hurry for the morning’s entertainment. It was a relief to him when the door had closed in his face.

“I will make him speak to-day,” muttered the young man. “I must know, and I will—he shall not evade my questions.”

His face became pallid, and he leaned for a moment against the archway. It occurred to him that a murderer waiting for sentence of execu-

The Corridor

tion must experience much the same sensations as his this morning.

A couple of ladies now appeared at the further end of the corridor, and after them a man, in the last stages of consumption. One of the ladies was talking fast and eagerly, and her words came echoing towards the young author.

“I do assure you, there’s no doctor like him in Europe. He simply works miracles—he can do everything except raise the dead! You would be astonished if you stayed here long enough; the operations he performs are truly marvellous. I beg your pardon, what did you say? I am rather deaf—that’s why I’ve come to him—but for the Treatment I’d be stone deaf, but I come to him each year, knowing that he will save me from that calamity. I hurried here with my niece, because—because she is suffering from chronic catarrh, and I—thought it was urgent.” Here the lady, whose eloquence had flowed smoothly on until she reached this point, stopped and stammered, while her colour rose as if she had made some departure from the truth. Her companion noticed nothing, however, and she recovered herself. “You will find that Dr. Deladoey will most certainly cure your husband, Mrs. Courtenay, and I beg of you to feel no uneasiness on his account. You could have done nothing better than bring

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him here. I beg your pardon? . . . Oh, you say that he seems worse after the journey? That's nothing—so do I; I am completely worn out; we travelled straight here without a stop, and I hardly know where I am this morning, with the sound of those perpetual wheels in my head, and the everlasting ding-dong of the Swiss signals. Here we are at the door—that door beyond is the exit for the patients he has treated, they go straight out of the Salle de Consultation; he won't allow them to return by the waiting room—and sometimes he sends them up to bed as soon as he has done with them. I'm afraid we are rather late, and that doesn't only mean a longer delay before our Treatment, but we shall find Dr. Deladoey much less sympathetic than he is in the earlier hours of the morning—I think his sympathy gets used up, that is my theory, and we are all afraid of him when he's in a temper; you have no idea how terrible he can be. May has gone in already; the child was quite eager to secure our places. She thinks it is all fun, but if she requires severe handling she won't long be so merry. Do look happier, Mrs. Courtenay; Dr. Deladoey is sure to cure your husband."

Donald McGregor, the young author, stood back while they passed. The lady's eager words seemed to rattle about his ears, disturbing him.

The Corridor

Then he became conscious of their effect upon the consumptive following behind—and that consumptive was no doubt Mrs. Courtenay's husband. As he passed, Mr. Courtenay turned to Donald with the most bitter and contemptuous sneer that he had ever seen written upon a human face.

The look shocked him. For the moment it banished from his mind its own absorbing thought. In that face he had read a hideous tale. The man was evidently angry with his destiny, hating the life which he was nevertheless most indignantly resigning. Donald McGregor was smitten with the passion of life—of any life, even one of pain!

Now he would enter the Salle d'Attente, he felt that he must know whether he had life or death before him. Every moment of suspense was more and more intolerable.

CHAPTER II—*The Salle d'Attente*

Both the windows in the Salle d'Attente were open. The sunshine was dazzling; where it struck the white roads of Donvery it was intolerably bright. Voices of birds thrilled through the air, as if the world belonged to them and their joy, and human sorrow did not exist.

Donald McGregor went and stood at one of the open windows, with his back to the crowded room. He stared hard at the brilliant sunshine, a look of defiance almost amounting to ferocity in his eyes.

“He *shall* tell me to-day,” he repeated, between his teeth.

It was a strange place. No sky could be more full of light, no human resort more full of anxiety and despair. And his was not the only splendid career that had here suddenly been checked—perhaps, indeed, checkmated altogether. The tension of his mind was agonising.

“Probably he'll do nothing worse to you than burn your nose with a red-hot wire,” said a teasing voice just behind him, and Donald half turned to listen.

The Salle d'Attente

“It doesn’t hurt much, you know, unless he happens to touch a spot which the cocaine has not affected. Cheer up, my dear, what are you afraid of? Eh?”

“I’m *not* afraid,” retorted the little English girl, and Donald felt a smile creeping round his white lips.

“Then why are you so pale?”

“I’m not pale, and I’m not frightened. Why don’t you tease Aunt Alice instead of me, Mr. Derwent? We came here yesterday because she wanted to be here at the same time as you. Otherwise we’d not have come until Saturday—don’t suppose it was only because she’s frantic to go and see that Dr. Deladumpy, or whatever his horrid name is. He can’t cure her of being as deaf as a post, and never does, but she spends her life coming here every year, and persuading other people that they’ve got to come, too.”

“My dear, that becomes such a habit with us all, that we cannot help it. Once in the clutches of Dr. Deladoey you are his willing or unwilling victim to the end of your days.”

“Sometimes,” put in Gustave Foucou, “Monsieur Deladoey cuts the throat. With an instrument he holds open the mouth, and then he gets a knife in his other hand, and he uses it.”

“Gustave, it is very wrong of you to intimidate

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Miss Tempest," said Mr. Derwent, "and it is quite possible that the doctor may not find it necessary to use the knife in her case. I have known patients who have never seen it." His tone implied that the number of these fortunate ones was very small. "Besides, hers may be a case that only requires the tweezers."

"The tweezers! what's that?" gasped the girl. Donald saw her face, the round, wide-opened eyes, for a moment destitute of their naughty twinkle. He watched its varying expression, distracted from his heavier thoughts.

"He seizes hold of the back of your throat with the tweezers," explained Mr. Derwent, "and then he twists—never mind the rest."

Little May Tempest looked scornfully at her tormentors, and then declared that she knew it was all nonsense.

"He has a *raclage* knife," said Gustave.

"What's that?"

"Oh, never mind, it is better not to tell. There are some things we dare not to mention, they are so *terribleel*. And he is not affected by your hurts, neither will he permit you to express your so great anguish."

"It's no use telling me any more silly stories," broke out little May. "I know all about men and boys; I'm quite accustomed to them, and as for

The Salle d'Attente

that Dr. Deladumpy, it would be almost as ridiculous for me to be afraid of him as of my own father. Doctors are always kind, more than any other sort of men."

"Here he is—look!" exclaimed Gustave, in her ear, as the door communicating with the Salle de Consultation opened sharply, and Dr. Deladoey stood there, waiting for his next patient.

May caught sight of a short, wiry figure, and then her eyes were held spellbound by the reflector that the doctor wore, now pushed up high on his forehead. It gave an extraordinary expression to a face already sufficiently peculiar. He was looking down with an appearance of bored patience, until his next victim rose and went to him, when the door was promptly shut.

"How did you admire him?" giggled Gustave, delighted with the look of dismay in his enemy's countenance. "I think you will not have a joke with *him!*"

"What's that thing he's got on his head?" asked May.

"That, my dear," answered Mr. Derwent, "is the reflector by which he sees down your throat into the middle of your head."

"And so discovers that which it is his delight to remove from the middle of your head, Mees Tempest."

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May turned from Gustave in contempt.

"If you smell burnt flesh in there, don't be alarmed," soothingly continued Mr. Derwent; "there's always a faint odour of it hanging about. You get to like it in the end."

"But in the beginning it speaks to you of operations," added Gustave, with relish.

"Which," concluded Mr. Derwent, "you also get to like in the end."

"I should think," said May, with a glance of withering scorn, "that at your age, Mr. Derwent, you ought to know better than to behave exactly like a schoolboy." With that she edged away from Gustave, who was almost literally sitting in her pocket.

"At my age, at my age!" repeated Mr. Derwent. "Upon my word and honour, Miss May, it was malarial fever that turned me bald. There's another fellow here just now for the same malady —Lester is his name, and he's bald, too."

"Yes," said May, "I've seen him. You look just about the same age."

"The same age!" cried Mr. Derwent. "Lester has a grown-up daughter with him, who must be thirty-five, if she's a day."

Meantime Gustave was indignantly denying that he was any longer a schoolboy, and Donald McGregor found himself laughing again. He was

The Salle d'Attente

all the time conscious of his extraordinary situation, and amazed to find it possible that he could still experience a distinct sensation of amusement. He began to fancy himself an invisible spectator of this curious scene, and with every faculty alert he watched the human beings before him as if he no longer partook of their humanity.

He saw an old man suddenly rise from his seat, where he had apparently been dozing, and he saw Gustave Foucou spring lightly to his feet and seize the old man's arm.

"No, no, Monsieur, you haven't been in yet," cried Gustave.

"I—I haf forgot my spectacles," returned the old man.

"Monsieur, you are not the Circulator," insisted Gustave, "and we do not accept that small excuse from any other person. I really may not let you escape to-day again. You have still time to sleep a little longer."

The old Polish Count sat down, and glared indignantly all round the Salle d'Attente. His look seemed to defy anyone there to prove that he ever had the slightest idea of escaping that which he had come purposely to Donvery to undergo, or to insinuate that he had been sleeping at this time in the morning.

Gustave returned to May.

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"We call him Bewilderment," he said, at confidential quarters, but Donald could hear every word, for he stood just behind. "He thinks he's been in already—and I'm not going to let him escape so long as I am here myself."

"Cheer up, Miss May," said Mr. Derwent, "you are looking anxious as your turn approaches. Are you frightened?"

"Don't tease her," put in Donald, unexpectedly, "it is a shame."

"Thank you, I am not teased," answered May, turning her face full upon him, and then she smiled in a way that gave Donald another curious, new sensation.

"Be sure you don't cry when Deladoey operates upon you," continued Mr. Derwent. "That's the one useful hint I will give you free of charge. He cannot bear children."

"I am not a child, I am grown-up," cried May, indignantly. The American had had his revenge, and again an incongruous feeling of mirth broke over Donald McGregor, in one of the most solemn moments of his life. "It was I who brought Aunt Alice here from England." A peculiarly mischievous smile dimpled the childish face.

"Ah? I was under the false impression that Miss Dopping conducted you! This requires investigation."

The Salle d'Attente

“It is the truth,” asseverated May, “and I’ll tell you how it was—she can’t hear a word from over there, though she’s listening hard—so I’ll tell you the truth. As soon as Uncle Edward got your letter, saying that you were here a fortnight earlier than your usual date, Aunt Alice would not stop another day in England, though Uncle Edward could not come quite so soon.”

Mr. Derwent looked thoroughly uncomfortable, and Donald’s quickened senses began to read another tale behind the faces of these distant beings who were acting out an hour of human life for his diversion.

“Aunt Alice *said* it was important that I should be seen at once, and father got into a fidget, and could not imagine why we need wait for Uncle Edward. Neither could I—when I had a chance to come without him.”

“Why not?” asked Mr. Derwent. “Your uncle is an excellent guardian for a young girl. He’s a very old friend of mine, tracts and all. We have enjoyed many a pleasant chat together in Don-very.”

“Has he ever converted you?” asked May.

“Not yet—he’s only going to. But come, you were telling us about your journey.”

“No, I was only telling you why we took that journey—you see, we couldn’t tell how long you’d

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be here, and Uncle Edward said he was afraid we'd miss you this year, and he had heard that you were going back to America, perhaps for good. You should have seen Aunt Alice's face when he said that—don't look at her now, or she'll think we're talking about her, and then she'll come and crowd us up on this sofa—she got into a perfect state about my serious catarrh which I have had ever since I was born, without knowing it, and as I thought it would be the best fun I ever had in my life, I pretended to be ill with the worst cold that I could imitate. So we started the next day. I have never been on the Continent before, and the journey was gorgeous fun—gorgeous!" repeated May, glancing at Donald to make sure that he was listening, too.

"Tell us about it," he said, in answer.

"I got Aunt Alice off the boat at Calais first of everybody, and bundled her and a commissionary off to the douâne like an arrow from a bow."

"A—commissionary?" ventured Mr. Derwent, but was instantly suppressed.

"The *commissionary*," repeated May, severely, "was jabbering away like anything, the purest nonsense. I took no notice of it, and, of course, Aunt Alice could not hear. There was another man behind the counter, who asked me questions in his nonsensical language. 'I don't understand you in

The Salle d'Attente

the least,' I said, 'they only taught me Parisian French at school, but we haven't any tobacco, if that's what you want to know.' "

"Ah—no doubt the—commissionaries—blushed at your rebuke? But how did you come to an understanding with these ignorant men?"

"They let us through without opening our bags," said May, with an air of triumph, "and I put Aunt Alice (who had been extremely unhappy on board, though it was quite smooth) into a carriage with two other maiden ladies. I thought they were suitable companions for her."

"I fail to understand why," said Mr. Derwent. "Your aunt is young, beautiful, and clever."

"That was why I did it," answered May, ever ready; "so were they. I never saw three such babies all together in my life. They were very nervous, poor things, so I said I would take care of them. I can talk French, you know. But the French people talk very badly—have you ever noticed it?"

"I have," said Mr. Derwent; "they don't seem to understand their own language, especially when it is purely spoken by English schoolgirls, do they?"

May chose to ignore this insult.

"It was a little difficult at the place where we had supper," she confessed, mischievously, "be-

The Specialist

cause they wanted chops, and I had never studied the French for chops."

"Then I suppose you candidly acknowledged it?"

May regarded him with derision.

"Of course I didn't. I said, 'If you take my advice, you will have soup; foreign meat is horrid. Or have a cup of café-au-lait, and some petty pangs.' One of them said she'd heard that about foreign meat, before, so they chose just the supper that I knew the French of, and Aunt Alice couldn't eat anything, even then, nor spoil my fun, because she could not hear a word."

"I thought your aunt could always hear you," suggested Mr. Derwent.

"Yes, when I choose," returned May, promptly. "I didn't choose that time."

Mr. Derwent rose suddenly and made room upon the sofa between himself and May. Miss Dopping was coming towards them. Her face was a little flushed, and Donald saw how her colour deepened at Mr. Derwent's touch.

"It is our turn next, May," she said, "but you need not be afraid—there is nothing radically wrong with *you*." Her tone seemed to imply that her own case was worth a little fright.

"Oh!" piped up May, the irrepressible, "then why did you urge father to send me here without a day's delay?"

The Salle d'Attente

Miss Dopping became rather more deaf than usual, and addressed herself to Mr. Derwent.

"What new Treatment has the doctor invented this year? I am really very timid, one never knows what he will do next; he seems to be full of the most extraordinary resources, which he performs upon his victims without any warning."

"And to which they all submit with the resignation of despair," added Mr. Derwent.

"I hear sounds," broke in Gustave, with unfeigned delight; "you are now going to the Treatment, Mees Tempest, and I shall listen to hear you cry."

May Tempest turned as if in appeal to Donald. He could see that she was thoroughly frightened.

"It is all right," he said. "The Treatment does not hurt much."

Miss Dopping took her niece's hand, patting it encouragingly, and then she nodded and smiled at Mrs. Courtenay, wishing to impart to someone else the confidence she felt herself in the genius of this Specialist. As the door closed again, Donald's attention became focussed upon the Courtenays, sitting at the far end of the room. They, also, hailed from America, as he knew, and for that reason he felt a curious interest in them.

"That woman is absolutely beautiful," he said to himself, "and she is most unhappy."

The Specialist

It was not difficult to fathom her unhappiness, looking at the face of the man she had married.

There was a murmur of conversation from all sides, but with his attention concentrated upon them he could hear the words which passed between that couple.

"No one ever regrets coming here, Reggie—he is the most wonderful doctor in Europe. He will cure you."

"H'm!"

"Miss Dopping has boundless faith in him, and she ought to know, for she has been here ten years running. She has seen miracles of healing performed that made her think of the miracles of Christ."

Here the consumptive laughed in a way that brought a shudder to Donald.

"Do not laugh," entreated the low, soft voice, with a little break in it that travelled straight to the heart of Donald McGregor across all the noise of this crowded room. "You must know that I did not mean that he healed by any miraculous power of his own, but that he has reached a point in medical science which other doctors have not yet reached, and that he will certainly cure you, Reggie."

"Oh, yes, of course," said the man, with a sneer that made Donald wish to thrash him, though the

The Salle d'Attente

young author knew that he was not far from that awful, hopeless struggle which vanquishes every man in the end.

He returned to his window, once again withdrawing into his own small circle of self.

A chaffinch in one of the great trees outside was shrilling its joy to a world where there were scenes like this!

CHAPTER III—*The Salle de Consultation*

IT was a long, narrow room, with a sofa at one end, a writing table in the middle, and a curtained partition at the other end. Behind that curtain Dr. Deladoey treated his patients. The recess was fitted up with various electrical appliances, and looked not unlike a highly civilised torture chamber. Little May Tempest took it all in with wide, round eyes, and she had plenty of time to imbibe alarm, for the Specialist was making a careful examination of her aunt's ears and throat, and they both seemed unconscious of her presence.

“Ah, very good,” said the Specialist, pushing his reflector up off his forehead; “Mademoiselle will continue the pulverisations this year, and I will commence Treatment to-morrow.” He rose as if to dismiss her, and Miss Dopping hastily introduced May.

“This is my niece, Mossoo. I have brought her to you to be cured of chronic catarrh, from which she has been suffering for years.”

“No,” corrected May, “I have not suffered any-

The Salle de Consultation

thing—and chronic catarrh doesn't signify in the least."

"No? Is that so?"

"I'm not afraid of you," burst out May, resenting the doctor's tone and the half-laughing scrutiny with which he was now regarding her, having up to this moment taken no notice of her.

"So? And for what reason should I expect you to be afraid of me?" he asked. "I will now examine, and see what is to be done in order to cure this demoiselle, who is not afraid of me but who possesses a courage stupendous! Advance the face, mon enfant, so—and now open the mouth Be comforted, Mademoiselle, we will cure this catarrh that does not signify, we will put this stupendous courage to the test. Sit down, mon enfant, we have not finished, have not even commenced, but in this case we will commence without delay, for that which is chronic requires time. Raise the head—so. We will now apply cocaine, unless a demoiselle of such courage will undergo the Treatment without it?"

At this point her aunt retreated precipitately to the sofa at the other end of the room, thereby greatly increasing her poor little niece's alarm. Terrible, indeed, must be this operation which 'Aunt Alice dare not witness!

The doctor rolled a bit of cotton wool round

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the point of an instrument, and dipped it into a small bottle, but when he offered to apply it to her nostril, May shrank back.

“Come,” said Dr. Deladoey, with his terrifying smile, “this is but cocaine, the deadener of pain. We will apply it without delay, so, do not shrink, mon enfant.”

“I’m not a child,” whimpered May, “I’m grown-up.”

“Ah? So you are grown-up? That must be the cause of your intrepidity, courage. For this so admirable virtue I will grant a little more cocaine, for I have mercy; it causes me to suffer when there is a necessity to give pain.”

“Be quick!” cried May, “or the effects of the cocaine will be over. Oh, do be quick!”

“Not so, it is still too soon, Mademoiselle. It requires three minutes to rest and enjoy the pleasures of anticipation Now, tell me, do you feel this?”

“No, no, no, Mussyou!” cried May, backing from his hand.

He looked astonished, then laughed.

“I wish I had never come here,” burst out May. “Aunt Alice! Aunt Alice!”

He drew his chair nearer, and ceased laughing. May put up her hands and pushed his arm away. His eyes began to glitter dangerously.

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“Mademoiselle, allow me to do my work.”

“No!” screamed May.

Then a flush rose in his cheeks, and he flung his instrument down. He rose and whisked off to the other end of the room, where Miss Dopping was covering her eyes and trembling on the sofa. May instantly sprang up, and with a bound reached the outer door. He wheeled round sharply, but she flung the door open, said “Bong jour, Mussyou,” and fled.

Miss Dopping and the doctor were left face to face.

“I’m very sorry,” faltered Miss Dopping. “I—I tried to reassure her, but she has been spoilt, she has, indeed; I and my brother frequently deplore it. She has no mother, and her father ruins her with indulgence. I shall have to speak very seriously to her about this.”

“Give my compliments to Mademoiselle, your niece,” said the doctor, “and tell her that I admire her bravery, her courage; it gives me much pleasure to treat a patient so intrepid. Au revoir.”

Miss Dopping was dismissed, and knew it, so she did not venture upon any further apologies. She followed her naughty charge, with a feeling that her first morning at Donvery had been spoilt.

As ill-fortune decreed, Dr. Deladoey’s next pa-

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tient was little Louis Roulet, a small boy who had to be dragged in daily for Treatment, and who often had to be dismissed untouched, in spite of all sorts of bribes, cajoleries and threats. The doctor had a standing objection to children patients, which he made no attempt to conceal, and this morning he had less endurance than usual, and conveyed the struggling boy to the chair behind the curtain with a clutch upon his arm that terrified Louis, who began howling lustily.

Madame Roulet, the small boy's mother, stood behind, arguing, coaxing, scolding. She added to her entreaties, tears, but Louis had no regard for any of these things, and Dr. Deladoey turned his flushed face to Madame Roulet, saying that he found it impossible to manage her so troublesome son.

"Oh, Monsieur, I implore you to try once more; Louis shall, indeed, behave with more circumspection," she promised, in the same breath letting forth a shrill volley of invectives against the screaming child.

"Madame, I decline to attempt the Treatment upon your son this day, or any day on which he resists that which is for his own benefit. Au revoir."

It was useless to argue, and the poor French lady, who had already missed her right turn through Louis' escape from the Salle d'Attente

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just before they should have gone in to the Treatment, now bore away her rebellious offspring for a morning's punishment, which, however, he preferred to the five minutes of benefit to himself which Dr. Deladoey was willing to substitute.

Gustave Foucou came next, another patient whom he had no pleasure in treating, for the French boy was apt to lose courage at crucial moments, and to start at the application of the wire in spite of angry warnings regarding the danger of this folly. One glance at the doctor's face had made a coward of Gustave this morning, even before the Treatment began, and he shrank into his chair scarcely able to control a sob.

The doctor sat down, with a jerk, opposite him.

Gustave tried to endure, but at the first touch of the wire he let forth a howl that aroused the doctor's anger and brought upon himself a little extra Treatment, instead of a little less. Not until he had vented his pent-up wrath upon this cowering victim and reduced him to a sobbing, miserable lump did Dr. Deladoey begin to relent. At the first gleam of a smile, Gustave revived.

"Monsieur," said the French boy, "it is but half-past-eleven, and yet, see how you treat me."

The Specialist laughed.

"You do not well to follow Louis Roulet," he suggested.

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“That is what we all know,” answered Gustave, hastily mopping his eyes, “and I took care to let other unfortunates secure the position following Madame’s, but Louis escaped from the Salle d’Attente, and Madame had to follow him to bring him back, and they returned just before my turn came to come to you, so I was obliged to give them precedence. It shall not happen again.”

The doctor chuckled as he drove this daring scamp out of the room, and Gustave knew that he had had the best of it, after all.

Mr. Derwent followed Gustave, and he went through the Treatment in the steady, unflinching way that had brought upon the English-speaking race Dr. Deladoey’s comment that he preferred them as patients before any other nationality.

“I am not going to ask you how long you wish to keep me in this infernal place,” said Mr. Derwent, as they rose, “conscious as I am of your objection to allow a glimmer of hope to shine upon our despair, but I am going to ask you how you got on with Miss May Tempest? I am under the impression that there will be interviews of a new description between you and this charming individual.”

“Your impression is correct,” returned the doctor; “we have already had an interview of an original nature. *Au revoir.*”

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Mr. Derwent wanted to hear more, but he had sense enough to accept his dismissal. This was all the better for the Courtenays, who followed him, and who had not yet learned the wisdom of these older patients, it being their first introduction to the Salle de Consultation.

The doctor received them with cold politeness, and put his introductory questions in a sharp, business-like manner.

“He is very ill, Monsieur,” said Mrs. Courtenay, eagerly—and the beauty of her voice and face pleaded together—“but you can cure him, of course?”

The doctor turned and looked at her in surprise. Such a look would have silenced one less earnest.

“We have every confidence in you—you can cure my husband, Monsieur, can you not?”

“Do be quiet, Constance,” said the invalid, “and allow the doctor to do his business without these interruptions.”

“But I want to know what he thinks—I must,” she said. “Oh, Monsieur, do you not think that he will soon be better?”

“That remains a matter still to prove, Madame.”

Dr. Deladoey turned on another light, and proceeded with his examination. And the poor young

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wife stood by, keeping the silence they had imposed on her.

“To-morrow,” said the doctor, “I think it might be advisable—I should prefer it myself, Monsieur—if you would come to me alone.”

“I will,” said Reginald Courtenay, gruffly.

“Can you not tell me anything to-day?” asked Mrs. Courtenay, appealing to the Specialist with wild, beseeching eyes.

“It is too soon, Madame, to be asking me for an opinion only to be formed by degrees.” He had his back to her, and his voice sounded harsh.

“Could you not give me some idea?” she pleaded, adding, with a pathetic little break in her words, “I have watched him in—such anxiety for—weeks and months, and at last it seems as if I—cannot bear the strain.”

“Constance, you make an exhibition of yourself,” interrupted her husband. “We had better wish the doctor good morning at once. Can’t you see that he would prefer to say nothing for a few days?”

“That is so,” cried the doctor, “nothing for a few days, Madame.”

“A few days!” she exclaimed, and stopped. Her husband’s evident annoyance arrested her, so she once more took up her burden of torturing silence.

After the Courtenays had gone, Dr. Deladoey,

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sat for some time before his writing table. The new page in his Patients' Book consecrated to Reginald Courtenay was open before him, and he made a few notes in French. No one was there to see him—he leaned his head upon his hand and drooped. He was tired.

But there were still patients in the Salle d'Attente; a man like him could not afford a minute's respite, and he went to the communicating door again, with his usual look of bored patience that was known so well in Donvery. Donald McGregor marched in, pallid but determined.

“Moosyou!”

Dr. Deladoey waved him towards the recess, and Donald obeyed that imperious gesture, but turned his eyes commandingly upon the Specialist as they faced each other there.

“Moosyou, I am resolved—you must speak plainly to me to-day.”

“Is it that my accent is a puzzle, a bewilderment to you?” returned the doctor. “I have not understood.”

“It is nothing of the sort, and you know it,” answered Donald, rather excitedly, “but I am not going to stand this beating about the bush any longer, and to-day I must and will hear what you think of my case. You go on operating twice a week, and the Treatment causes torture. What

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is the use of it all? I wish to know your candid opinion."

"Open the mouth, if you please."

The application of cocaine down his throat prevented Donald replying at once. As soon as he could speak he explained himself still further.

"I am asking you—demanding you—to tell me how long you intend to let me live, and I must have an answer this morning."

Dr. Deladoey had left him, and was examining his Patients' Book again. He appeared unconscious of Donald's speech.

"Well, how long?" persisted Donald, almost angrily, as the doctor returned.

"I am no prophet. Can you swallow?"

"No."

"Very good. Then I will commence."

He selected an instrument, humming a tune in an undertone. Then he had to meet his patient's compelling look. There was a moment's complete silence between these two, eyeing each other in a strange way. Donald heard the voice of his chaffinch, still piping in the tree.

"Why should you treat me like a woman, Deladoey? If you imagine that I have any frantic desire to live, you accuse me of a lack of sense, or else I have to conclude that you know less about the paltriness of life than I do. I have had my

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day . . . and the sooner the sun sets, so much the better."

"I am now ready to operate, Monsieur. So—vairy good, vairy good. Once more . . . It is over." He gave Donald an encouraging pat. "I now advise you to talk but little, and to avoid coughing. It would be an advantage to you to retire to your room for a few hours, there to rest in quietness. *Au revoir.*"

"I am not going until you tell me the truth," said Donald, doggedly.

Dr. Deladoey was perturbed. His flush became two brilliant spots of colour, he dug his hands into his pockets.

"I have reasons why I wish to know . . . there are affairs . . ."

"Settle them," rapped out the doctor.

Donald stood motionless. That bird—it was singing still.

"Oh—thank you," he said, and moved away.

His death sentence had been passed and he knew it, but the only strong impression of the moment was that a chaffinch's song is the most joyous thing on earth, and he went away smiling.

Dr. Deladoey had patients waiting for him, and every moment of his time was precious, but after Donald had left him he stood where he was with his hands buried in his pockets, and his eyes

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fixed in intense thought. The sunshine streaming through his window became concentrated in the reflector he wore, till it seemed as if the intensity of his thought had set him on fire with a flame that was not to be endured. There he stood, motionless he might have been the Lord of Life deciding whether he should grant the young author another lease.

Suddenly he awoke as out of a trance, and then he took one or two rapid turns up and down his room, and went for the next patient.

When the last was despatched he made his final entry in his Book, turned off the incandescent light and stretched himself. This had been one of the most remarkable mornings of his life, and he knew it.

He sauntered out to the door of the Hotel and stood there, in the sunshine, for some time. A few of his patients were wandering about the grounds, and these eyed him with the sort of interest a mouse might feel towards the cat who has let it go for a minute, but none of them made any sign—not one had the courage to molest him outside the Salle de Consultation.

Presently he moved slowly to a spot where a tricycle was wheeled into shelter, and having mounted it, he rode off. It seemed as if the spirit of Donverry followed that tricycle.

CHAPTER IV—*The Moon of Switzerland*

DONALD McGREGOR sat at his table with paper and ink before him. He had a letter to his mother, on his blotter, and had just written the words, “It is a fine thing to be a traveller, and especially in Switzerland. From this place there are views I will not attempt to describe. While I write, the moon is rising over the mountains. You should see it! I am writing by its light, unaided. I never enjoyed a pleasure trip so much before.”

He pushed away the paper with something like a sob. The dear old lady would read these words aloud to the dear old gentleman, his father, in a few days from now, and he could hear her delighted, quavering voice remarking, “He’s enjoying himself fine, Fayther.”

Through the long hours of that day he had remained up here alone, too ill to care to mix with the strangers in this great Hotel, and too proud to allow anyone to sympathise with him. This morning’s operation had caused him more suffering than he now thought it worth—his life might

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possibly be prolonged a little by the Treatment—but what of that? Was it worth while to endure so much for the sake of a few more hours, weeks, or even months? And how was he to know that it could be prolonged at all?

The moon was rising over the shoulder of the mountains, and Donald was attracted to his window. He threw it open wide to breathe the refreshing mountain air, and gaze at the oncoming night. Something in him responded aloud to the sublime spectacle. The deep, almighty calm of nature sank into his spirit.

Triumphant the moon arose, sending down a radiance over this world of agitations and dismays that might well put man to shame—every stone upon the path, every leaf upon the tree, cut out sharp and clear in the flood of silvery brightness that came pouring over the mountains.

A smart tap at his door startled Donald out of his moonlight rapture. As he shouted to the intruder to enter, his face fell into its former angry misery, and his heart returned to its bitterness. It is not easy for a young man to resign himself to an early death just at the point where his career promises to be successful.

“Oh, it’s you,” he said.

Dr. Deladoey smiled. He shut the door, and laid his finger on the button to turn on the elec-

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tric light; then, seeing that this was not necessary for his purpose, he said, "No, it would be a pity, a sort of a pity to illumine a room made ethereal by the moon. Well, my friend, how do you find yourself to-night? Do you feel some admiration for our moon of Switzerland? For myself, I think it equals the moons of other countries."

"The effect of moonlight upon the sea is infinitely superior," declared Donald, the spirit of contradiction too strong within him at this moment to be resisted. The tension on his brain had all day long been far too great.

"Yes? I acknowledge, my friend, that this is a poor show," returned Dr. Deladoey, chuckling. He examined the luminous night with an air of criticism. "These mountains," said he, "have a habit of staying where they are. You cannot expect an effect so fine upon shapes that will not move. The waves of the sea are of another nature, it is impossible to persuade them to keep still; so, no doubt, the moonlight skips upon the sea, while here it does but sleep. That which wakes is finer than that which slumbers."

Donald smothered the childish desire that possessed him to contradict again. While conscious of the absurdity of giving way to the resentment he felt against the doctor, he was still incapable of dissociating the calamity of his illness from

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the man who had failed to cure it. It was as if Dr. Deladoey had on purpose deprived him of his life.

The Specialist was standing at the window beside his patient, and it would be hard to say whether he attended most to Donald or the moonlight.

"In what way did you amuse yourself to-day?" he asked.

"By coughing, and swearing—at you, Moosyou, if you want to know."

"Ah! No doubt that gave you much of satisfaction."

"Why should you put me to the pain and inconvenience of these small operations, Moosyou?" Donald broke out, unable any longer to conceal the indignation against his hard fate which had tormented him all day. "Once a man is condemned, it's nothing but fiendish cruelty to keep him lingering on and not let him die in peace at once. Believe me, the sooner he's despatched, the better."

This long speech was too much for Donald to-night. It brought on a fit of coughing, and when that had passed, he threw himself upon his sofa, closing his eyes under fiercely knit brows. It was intensely annoying to be obliged thus to show his physical weakness. Dr. Deladoey, however, took

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no apparent notice. He had begun pacing up and down the room, with his head bent forward, and some extraordinary thought behind his glittering eyes. The silence remained unbroken for some time. Then, had it been daylight, Donald would have seen that the Specialist was ghastly pale, though no sound of emotion disturbed his voice.

“You care to live, my friend?”

At first Donald gave no answer. He thought of the splendid battle of life that he had not completed, of the joys he had not tasted, of love and friendship and home, of ambition and success, of genius triumphing over every difficulty, and of that which a man hopes—to hand down to his successors the advantages which he has won for them, the improved conditions he has secured. Then Donald thought of the grave and death, of an early career brought suddenly to an end with its promises unfulfilled, and the rigid discipline of youth all for no good.

“You care to live, my friend?” repeated the quiet, piercing voice.

“Why need you ask? Of course I do.”

“Yet, after all, you have confessed that there is such a thing as disappointment in life. Curious, is it not? Here is a man who complains with one breath that he is tired, weary of life, and yet he bewails that it is a difficulty to be finished with

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this so disappointing affair, in his second breath. And while he breathes for the third time, he wants, above all things mortal or immortal, to be granted a few more of these so disappointing years, and finds it outrageous to be released from them. Yet he is a man of sense, and knows that it makes small difference to die to-morrow, or after twenty years—the finale is the same. But perhaps, my friend, you have not yet suffered enough of disappointment to be resigned, you long—hanker, I think you call it—to be measured out the full weight of human grief, that so you may be better pleased to conclude the game?"

"No," said Donald, "all I want is to know when I may expect to be snuffed out. A month or two would make no difference to me—I do not care a rap whether you say I shall linger on for one month, or ten, except that I'd prefer the shorter period, since death is inevitable."

The doctor's voice dropped a note; it now began to vibrate, as if his emotion could no longer conceal itself.

"This desire for life is so great an instinct that a man would be willing to run any risk in the hope of securing it, even if the risk were great."

"What?" Donald raised himself, and stared at the doctor. He had caught hold of the back of the sofa with one hand, transformed by the moonlight

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into a phantom skeleton thing. The doctor's eyes fell on it. "Do you mean . . . ?"

"Calmly, my friend; I was but talking in a general kind of a way. It is not for you now to agitate the mind. Let us inquire why you should have this so great desire to live? You are like myself—you have no family of your own; therefore, the last reason for which a man might cling to his existence belongs not to you or me. It may be that your parents will grieve, but you have told me that they are old, and ought to bear the bereavement with philosophy, since they must expect soon to join you, unless you have taken a ticket for the other shore, as my friend Monsieur Dopping would have it! It has occurred to me to suggest to you that it would be well to summon them out of their abode in Scotland on account of the condition of their only son. At such times it is of comfort to be administered to by the hands of those who bear affection, better than sitting here alone to cough—and swear—at me (who have not earned these maledictions—yet)." The last words were nearly inaudible, and Donald took no notice of them at the moment, yet they were the most important words of that whole speech.

"No, I can die without their help," said Donald, and then, since the doctor was silent, he added, more softly, "What would be the good? It would

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only lacerate their feelings, and they are too old to be routed out of their home. I have not seen my parents for years, so they are now accustomed to my absence, and it cannot make much difference to them whether I am in London, Switzerland, or—Heaven! It would be better to let them alone—they don't even know that I am ill.”

“It is the way of parents to prefer to attend the bedside of their sons,” said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders as if he would wish to insinuate that such ways were doubtless very foolish.

“No, I cannot stand it,” said Donald. “It would be hideous for them and me. I'll die in peace without them.”

“Very good. Then you are quite resigned to die?”

“I suppose I must—apart from resignation.”

Dr. Deladoey took another turn or two up and down that moonlit room. All was silent now save for his quick, soft footsteps. It did not do to agitate this patient, especially so soon after his throat had been treated. The moonlight was creeping about the room, as if it followed the doctor. At last he began to talk again.

“Since you have to die, it makes but little difference to you when, I may conclude?”

“None whatever,” answered Donald, bitterly. “If you feel inclined to despatch me to-night, I

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won't grumble." He stopped, for he was startled. Dr. Deladoey had wheeled round and was gazing at him in a manner that made his flesh creep. The moonlight was uncanny round that slight, wiry figure, and a couple of eyes sparkled weirdly out of the shadows. "What is it?" breathed Donald.

"I care nothing for you, as a man," answered the doctor; "to me you are a thing—a patient. This makes it possible to me to conceive an idea. But you are very sure that you care not at all on which day you end your life? If, for instance, I suggested to you that next week you might make a painless departure, in a manner useful to science, you would on the whole prefer that to a long, fatiguing journey of agony?"

"Next week?" exclaimed Donald, amazed.

"And why not? Is not next week as good as any other? What I propose must be next week, or not at all."

"I cannot understand," said Donald, breathing heavily. "*Next week, or not at all?*"

"Because," said the doctor, scarcely more than whispering, "if we left it longer, it would be certain death." Then he raised his voice, "Science demands its victims, Monsieur, but they are a difficulty to find; they must be philosophers, men who discern that in bearing the penalty laid upon man-

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kind for the disobedience of nature, they may benefit their race, and that the sacrifice, the atonement, is worthy of its issue. I give you time to consider that which I propose. This is but Wednesday, and we might fix as our day the Thursday or Friday of next week."

"Do you mean that you intend to *fix the day of my death?*"

"And why not?"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Donald.

The doctor was buried deep in some inward thought. A cloud passing across the moon, he became invisible. They were plunged for a few moments into darkness. Donald suddenly broke into a mirthless laugh.

"Thursday is too soon, Moosyou, and I object to the ill-luck of Friday. I decline to be executed before Saturday—a good day, for they tell me that I was born on a Saturday." He was stopped by his hacking cough.

"You talk more than is quite necessary," said the doctor.

Donald struggled with his cough.

"When you are able to listen with calmness, I will tell you my proposal. But again I must repeat that you and I are in relation to each other only things—I the operator; you, an interesting case. I care nothing for you, as a man; to me

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you are a thing—a patient. Otherwise this would be to me impossible."

"Oh, skip that," muttered Donald. "I'm as cold and calm as the moon."

At the same moment that little cloud which had obscured the light passed suddenly away, and the cold, calm, brilliant moonshine broke into existence once again.

"I have imagined an operation," began the doctor, raising his eyes to look up into that bright, unearthly face which ruled the night. "It is dangerous, fatal, mad! But since you are so indifferent to life"

Donald laughed sharply.

"I am willing to attempt it upon you. This operation, let me tell you, is one of great, of immense, of stupendous interest to science. By it I might demonstrate a theory upon which I have formed my ideas—it would be an experiment worthy of a martyr. To you I look for that assistance which can be found among none but a philosopher, a man who understands that to die next week is no greater a calamity than to die in one month or two—which is the limit of your life, my friend."

"And if it succeeded?"

There was no answer.

Donald got up, perspiration breaking out over

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his brow. He went and stood opposite the Specialist, and the two men stared at each other in silent fear. Then the younger man turned away to the window, and gazed into the face of the moon. She looked back calm and still, sailing across the great, almighty sky, unruffled by these trifling human emotions. What did it matter whether a man died next week or in one month, or two?

“Since you are in any case incurable, science may as well have the benefit of this experiment,” said the doctor, from behind him. “It is an operation, I may tell you, that has never yet been tried; it is one of my own invention, and one which I may never again have the opportunity of attempting I will at once summon down from Lausanne a physician there, a friend of mine, an authority of weight in throat and lung complaints, whose opinion I should wish you to hear, that you may be convinced of the advanced state of your disease, and that I speak the truth when I limit your possibilities to one month, or two.”

“Scarcely necessary, as far as I am concerned,” said Donald. “I know it all the time—my strength is ebbing away, as surely as the tide goes out.” He dropped his head upon his hand.

“You are now sufficiently tired, and would be wise to retire to bed, not to consider me, who re-

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quire sleep equally as much. Perhaps you will let me know without unnecessary delay what you think of this thing which I have proposed?"

"One moment, Deladoey. Is there any chance for me, supposing I do submit?"

"A chance," said Dr. Deladoey, "one chance."

"You mean, actually—a chance of recovery?"

"One," slowly answered the doctor, "only one, in the countenance of three hundred chances all against you. I will not deceive you, I do not myself dream of so joyful a conclusion But what has that to do with a matter of great scientific interest?"

"Very well, I put myself in your hands, and will follow your advice."

"Oh, no, my advice is nothing in this matter. I naturally would wish that you should undergo an operation of such importance to me, but you must bear the responsibility of decision. And now, bon soir; resign yourself to sleep, sleep is good."

Donald laughed. The simple direction was amusing—sleep after this sort of midnight interview!

And the doctor went home in the moonlight. No one else in Donvery was astir, so the wakeful grasshoppers only, heard him argue aloud as he walked.

"He is a case, of course, no more to me than a

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case, the case I have awaited all these years. It is the Opportunity of my career! He is no more to me than any other man—I—I am aware of that, and I have genius, I have no human heart; I am indifferent how the thing concludes, if only to Monsieur Duval and to my profession I may demonstrate this theory upon which I stake my reputation! It is a matter of importance to science, he ought to be willing to endure I feel nothing towards you, my friend; I am a scientific man, indulging in no emotions And yet there is a chance—one chance for you, my friend, in this great peril ”

No sound broke the silence but the voice of the Specialist, and the echo of his footsteps approaching the cemetery of Donvery. Then there was no sound but the echo of his footsteps hurrying by.

Moonbeams flooded the quiet world, and rested bright on every tombstone. What matter if another cross of stone should be erected there above another human heart that had ceased its restless beating?

There was plenty of room in the cemetery of Donvery.

CHAPTER V—*On the Road to the Beer Garden*

THROUGH the gate at the back of the Hotel Grounds at Donvery is a foot-path, and it leads to a road winding between the Jura Mountains. Somewhere on this road is a Beer Garden, and not infrequently bands of tipsy peasantry returning from a holiday disturb the peace of this mysterious way. Perhaps it was on account of them that so few of the visitors at Donvery used this road—and Donald McGregor expected solitude when he went out alone next morning, instead of going to the Salle d'Attente to apprise the Specialist of the decision which he had not yet made. He was coming out to make it.

It is a beautiful road, and easy for invalids. All along the way are large stones here and there, and on the stones bask lizards, who politely vacate their position the moment anyone approaches. There is a ceaseless, bell-like noise in the grass. Some people say it is the voice of grasshoppers, but others maintain that it is the cry of cockroaches. Looking close, one can see the banks riddled with holes, the homes of some such little

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creatures. The air above trembles with another sound—the twittering, chirping, and calling of the birds.

Wild flowers of an infinite variety may here be found; a mountain stream dashes across the road, spanned by a rustic bridge; a cascade in the far distance adds its undertone of harmony—at every step you learn another secret of the Jura Mountains. It would not do to tell those secrets, for they are not human.

Donald McGregor, having walked as far as he could, sat down on a stone near the stream. He was obliged to make the great decision himself, since Dr. Deladoey had refused to undertake the responsibility for him. He was driven and tortured by the necessity of doing so without delay—deliberation was necessary—and he was given no time! Here it was quiet, he was undisturbed, he would turn the matter over in his mind.

This stone had been placed under a friendly tree that held its sheltering arms above to guard travellers from the sun. There was no wind, and the great leaves scarcely flapped. Donald leaned back against the tree and closed his eyes. He was seeking composure to solve the problem of his life.

He heard the lusty singing of birds, the sound of water babbling and bubbling, the deep monotone of that far-off cascade. He heard a soft, mysteri-

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ous rustling, and opened his eyes—but there was nothing to account for it. A brightly coloured lizard at his feet attracted his attention. The little fellow was looking up at him with an irresistibly comical air, his head on one side. The lizard had never seen a man so still, and was speculating whether it might not be safe to run up his leg. Donald put out a hand towards it, and his small companion scuttled away in a panic.

“That is the way with everything,” he muttered; “it is not worth while to be alive.”

It was one huge, frightful Disappointment to be alive—there was nothing in existence worth all the labour it entailed. Why not give it up and end it quietly next week? If in doing so one could be of use to science, so much the better. A most unreasonable sense of failure and grief possessed him—that little lizard was the embodiment to him of all the elusive joys of life.

“I give it up—he shall have his way.”

As these words rose to his lips he heard a human voice! This was the one thing that now had power to upset the composure of despairing resignation he had almost reached. It called him sharply back to that wild passion for life which our instincts recognise in the face of all the philosophy of the world.

An English girl was returning from a solitary

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ramble down this road. That in itself was curious, for English girls abroad are generally afraid of going out alone; there is a tradition that it is not safe! She had flowers in her hand, which she was sorting, and while she did so she sang, or rather hummed, a few snatches of some weird music that she had heard in the mountains. She was close to Donald before she discovered that she was not singing to herself alone, when her performance ceased abruptly, and involuntarily her steps paused, too. She stopped in front of him, embarrassed.

“Beautiful day,” said Donald, saluting her. He never dreamed of waiting for an introduction. When a man is confronted by death he does not consider such trifles. He longed inexpressibly to hear an English voice speaking to him. “Don’t you think so?” he added, appealingly.

“I do,” she returned, amused. Then her eyes reached his face. “You are one of Dr. Deladoey’s patients, are you not?” she asked. “I think I have seen you in the Hotel.” It seemed as if she were apologising to him, as if she felt that she had taken a liberty in asking this simple question—when every tone of her voice conveyed a sense of comfort to him!

“I am,” he answered—“for about a week longer.”

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“Perhaps you are better?” she ventured, and glanced along the road homewards.

“I mean,” said Donald, in a panic lest she should leave him, “that I shall probably die in about a week.”

“But . . . !”

“It is true,” he said, eagerly; “Dr. Deladoey has settled it for next week.”

She came a step nearer, her eyes wide open and startled.

“It seems absurd,” said Donald, “face to face with such abounding health.”

Helen Lester felt as if the look which travelled from his eyes hit her with physical force, and she winced.

“I wonder how you would take it, if they informed you that you would die next week?” said Donald.

The flowers dropped from Helen’s hands, the colour went from her cheeks, but into her eyes there came a light that held Donald fascinated.

“It would be the most wonderful thing in all the world,” she breathed.

“How?”

“I should know that I was on the point of finding out the Secret.”

“What secret?”

“The Secret of life, why we are here, the

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use of existence, and pain, and toil, and *what comes after.*"

"I can tell you that. Nothing."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the girl, "that is impossible! We couldn't live so long, and suffer so horribly"—she shuddered—"for Nothing. It is impossible."

Donald looked keenly at her. What had this girl endured, this girl with the splendid physique, to draw such words from her?

"I suppose you are hankering after those streets of gold, and every gate a jewel, that were promised in our nursery days?"

The girl stood motionless before him. They were gazing all unconsciously into each other's eyes. They were going together, step by step, across the barriers of convention. At certain moments in life these sink into contempt.

"If it is any comfort to you, believe the fable," said Donald, "and may the day be long in coming, or come never, when the dream that pleases you begins to vanish."

The girl trembled. She was in the presence of a great mystery, and knew it.

"That is not my dream," she whispered, in the long pause that followed.

"Then what is it?" he asked.

"A new existence—Reality!"

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“Reality! Nothing is real except this sort of thing.” He tapped the great stone on which he sat. “But these flowers,” he continued, picking up the blossoms she had dropped, “and these poor fingers of yours and mine that gather them, have been endowed with the fatal gift, and, therefore, we go out into nothing. The stone never had it, therefore it remains.”

“What gift?”

“The gift of life. There is nothing more fatal in the world.”

“Then it is better to be a stone.”

He bowed his head. She heard him say, “The stone remains.”

“You must have forgotten something,” urged Helen. “There is no such thing as annihilation of matter, after all—it may be changed, but it cannot become extinct. Then, if matter cannot be destroyed, why should spirit?”

“Because it is exactly contrary to matter,” returned Donald.

“That doesn’t seem to be an answer,” she said, “because sleep is exactly contrary to waking, and yet it implies waking. I think that this is meant to teach us that death (which is only the sleep of the soul) implies another awakening.”

Donald fixed his eyes upon her with a hungry stare.

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“You do acknowledge that it is the soul—or spirit—or something that we call by those names, which makes a body alive, don’t you?” she asked, earnestly.

“I suppose so.”

“And do you not consider that soul and body can exist apart from each other?”

“They live and die together,” he said, positively.

“There you are wrong,” she instantly replied, not without a touch of triumph, “for after the soul has gone out of the body, the body still remains, so it is evident that one of them can go on for some time, at all events, without the other. Otherwise, the body would suddenly vanish each time a person died. Then why should the other part of us, the more important, the very life itself, become extinct when the unimportant part remains a long time whole, and after that only dissolves in order to become once more that part of nature which supplies fresh life to other bodies, in fact, even becomes again part of those other bodies? Does not this reincarnation of the body promise that the analogy of nature shall be fulfilled, and our souls continue, perhaps in other forms, but at least shall not be lost and wasted and annihilated?”

He did not answer her; his eyes fell from her

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eager, living face to the dying flowers she had plucked. He toyed with her flowers.

“They are very beautiful,” said Helen, softly, “but they were not made like that for nothing.”

“What do you think they’re for, then?”

“They are part of our wonderful education, to compel us to believe that there is something better than this poor sort of existence. I think,” she added, whispering, “that it was God who made them beautiful, for there is no other explanation.”

“Do not believe in God,” said Donald. “He is only an invention of man’s to account for everything that he cannot understand.”

“Oh, no! oh, no!” cried Helen. “It would be too lonely in this world if there wasn’t any God. And to die! To go out into the dark alone! It is not true; when we die we shall know better, we shall find God, we shall discover where He is. He is somewhere, you know; every faculty we possess demands it. There is otherwise no solution to the frightful problems of this life. Oh, does not His Existence answer every black question that haunts the mind?”

“Perhaps,” said Donald. “When you say it, it does not seem impossible.”

She hesitated—there were words upon her lips that she could not restrain, but they brought great tears welling up into her eyes. She turned away

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that he might not see them, and then she spoke.

“That strong, keen life of yours,” she said, “it looks out of your eyes and enters into every tone of your voice, and you tell me that in about a week it is going out into the dark alone, to be annihilated at one sharp blow! I tell you, that instead it will rise into the splendid light of a more perfect knowledge, where the mysteries that surround you here will be made plain. One of us is right—which? Which of these things seems the more probable?”

Overcome by a sudden overwhelming emotion she beat a hasty retreat, and Donald sat motionless on his stone, gazing fixedly after her. He never stirred until a bend in the road deprived him of the vision.

CHAPTER VI—*Common to All*

MRS. COURTENAY stood at her bedroom door, watching her husband walk down the long passage. He had impatiently resisted her entreaties to allow her to come with him to the Salle d'Attente; he was determined to go alone. Half-way down the passage he turned to see if she watched him, and scowled when he caught sight of her figure at the door. He motioned to her to go in, and waited until she did. Then he reeled up against the wall and felt his way along to the top of the stairs. There he rested some time, but at last, grasping the rail, he descended feebly. Hearing footsteps he straightened himself, and though he kept hold of the rail there was no longer any sign of the weakness apparent a moment ago.

With head erect, and lips firmly set, he entered the Salle d'Attente, and sat with folded arms waiting for his turn. He paid no attention to his companions after the one greeting sneer with which he had favoured them.

“Ah, now did I bring my newspaper wit’ me?” murmured a gentle voice in his ear. “I cahn not remember.”

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It was the old Polish Count, who had been nicknamed Bewilderment.

"No, Monsieur, you did not bring it to-day," volunteered Gustave Foucou, Mr. Courtenay having appeared unconscious that he was addressed, "but here's the doctor, and it's your turn. I think you'd better go to him this morning, as you escaped me yesterday, after all, and you haven't been for nearly a week."

"Yes, I haf come here each day," returned the Count, with indignation.

"But you always went away again before it was your turn, Monsieur."

The old man stumbled across the room in a hurry.

"What for have you not been to me so long?" asked Dr. Deladoey, at the communicating door.

"I thought — I was impressed — haf I not ?"

The door shut sharply upon the rest.

"Like to see the news?" asked Mr. Derwent, seating himself beside his countryman. He had been looking about restlessly, but those for whom he looked had evidently not yet arrived.

"Thanks."

Mr. Courtenay buried himself in the newspaper, and it was pretty plain that he was not anxious for conversation. Mr. Derwent gave him a side-

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long glance. The poor fellow looked very ill, but that need not have made him surly. Just then some one else came in, and immediately Mr. Derwent be-took himself to another corner. He happened to find a seat beside Miss Dopping's, she having hastily chosen that same corner.

"I cannot find May," she said, fluttering visibly as he approached her, and appealing to him timidly. "I have been running all over the place, until I am quite out of breath—that is what makes me so late this morning. Whatever *will* her father say when he hears? Think of the expense of bringing her here all this way, if she *will* not undergo the Treatment! I do hope Edward will come soon; he can always manage her, and no one else *can*—she has been ruined by over-indulgence." The poor little lady was almost crying.

"Do not distress yourself," said Mr. Derwent. "I will be a father and an uncle to her until your brother comes. Here, Gustave, go at once and search for Miss Tempest, and see that you bring her here in ten minutes. (If a little persuasion is necessary, you might suggest to her that on Thursdays the doctor never uses his battery—you might insinuate that it gets used up, and has to have a rest.)" The last sentence was not spoken so clearly or so loud as the first, and Gustave darted away, delighted with his mission.

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“What did you tell him?”

“I told him that I would keep his seat for him while he was searching for Miss May.”

May’s flight from the Salle de Consultation on the previous day had taken wind, as such trifling affairs always do in a place like Donvery, and a hearty laugh was going round the room when Reginald Courtenay rose to go to the doctor. His was the only serious face at that moment, especially now that it had been discovered that May was in hiding to-day. Perhaps he saw nothing amusing in the tale, already considerably embellished.

“And while he was looking for his instrument, up she hopped, and, with a flying leap, disappeared out of the window,” some one was saying.

Reginald walked firmly in, but when the door was shut upon himself and the doctor, he tottered to the sofa and fell back like one whose strength is gone.

“Vairy weak,” said the doctor, standing before him with his figure rigid. “Vairy weak.”

“Almost giving in,” said Reginald, faintly.

“So much the better—give in.”

“No, I won’t,” answered Reginald, rousing himself, “not one moment before it becomes impossible to hold up.”

“Consider that the moment has come.”

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“It has not; but now, thank Heaven, there’s a respite. It’s neither necessary nor possible to hoodwink you.”

“Hoodwink? What is that?”

“Deceive, make you believe what isn’t true—that I’m in capital health, for instance.”

“Hoodwink,” repeated the doctor, “I like this word hoodwink. So Madame Courtenay has an idea that you are in capital health? You have done this thing, hoodwink, to her?”

Reginald growled.

“It might be advisable to dis-hoodwink Madame, if that is a right expression,” continued the doctor, reflectively, “for, my friend, you are aware that you are not many steps from the last.”

“Yes, I know that well enough.” The tone was like a curse, there was a muttered sound as if the curse were put into words.

“It is a thing common to all,” said Dr. Deladoey, “but to some it comes so late that they grow weary waiting for it. After fifty years we shall all be equal in this matter, and go to sleep. Sleep is good. . . . Let me urge you, my friend, to dis-hoodwink Madame without delay.”

“No; she shall not know.”

“But it is fatiguing, unrestful, to hoodwink; you would find it a relief to cease this so tiring game.”

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“The other would be more tiring, sickening. Women are bad enough hoping. I’m not going to stand the fuss and howling Don’t argue I forbid you to tell my wife.”

“Whether you tell Madame your wife is your affair, but in my opinion it would be well for her to discover the truth.”

“Your opinion is not mine,” was Reginald’s gruff reply.

The doctor did not retaliate. He stood and looked at his patient.

“Well, I won’t detain you,” said Reginald, sitting up. “I suppose this was all you wanted me for? You’re busy, if you’re going to attend all those magpies in there this morning.”

“Time is of no consequence to me, Monsieur, do not mention it. If I happen to be here to-night I may look in on you. What is your number?”

“Nothing, I don’t want you.”

“A good night would be restful,” said the doctor, in an off-hand manner. “I might assure you a night’s repose.”

“In that case—twenty-five. I find the first floor high enough, though it’s infernally dear. . . . Once again, I repeat that I forbid you to alarm Mrs. Courtenay.”

Dr. Deladoey shrugged his shoulders. These Transatlantic people were peculiar, they seemed

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to take delight in hiding from each other that which it seemed most natural to tell. It was not his affair if this man preferred to die while his wife considered him recovering. Possibly she, being American, might prefer it, too! Well, let them make out their riddles for themselves—it was not his affair.

Mr. Courtenay walked out of the room with his hands in his pockets, the most defiant attitude a man so weak could assume. At the door he slightly reeled, but he recovered himself without putting out a finger in self-preservation.

“Why can’t the damned place keep still?” muttered Reginald, angrily, hurling a curse or two about him in search of relief. But the most hideous language had no virtue to heal the soreness of his spirit, and the vilest could not ease his pain. Every hour his torture increased, and the last two or three days, beginning with the miserable journey here, had precipitated him onward with a velocity that could not be checked. Before he started he had known it was useless. On a fool’s errand he had come.

“What did he say, Reggie?”

Here was his wife, coming eagerly towards him.

He put on a jaunty air and dropped into his armchair carelessly.

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“He says that in a day or two my disease will be cured. Think of it—cured! But he advises me not to talk, it irritates the throat and the temper,” he added, *sotto voce*.

“Monsieur, Monsieur, how can we ever thank you? You must, indeed, have genius—and to be able to do it so soon! It is one of the most astonishing things I ever heard!”

“How? What? What have I done?” asked Dr. Deladoey, stepping back. For once he was disconcerted.

“My husband tells me that you have promised to cure him. We have been in great spirits all day, though we have taken care not to talk, as you said so much of the cure depended upon how quiet he kept. He has even consented to lie down all the time, but only because that is part of the cure. He says he will only have to submit for a day or two—and then his terrible illness will be over. I cannot believe it—he has been getting worse and worse for months.”

Dr. Deladoey glanced down the passage, but he had never yet run away, and he suppressed the desire for flight.

“He is better already, Monsieur; at least he says so, and it must be true, as the cure will be so rapid. Oh, Monsieur, what joy, what bliss you

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have bestowed! 'Excuse me, Monsieur, I am agitated, I hardly know what I am saying, but it is with joy."

Dr. Deladoey glanced sharply at her radiant face, on the point of putting an abrupt end to this imbecile happiness. Perhaps it was that he knew no English words appropriate to the occasion—but instead of shattering her hopes, as he intended, he became impatient.

"I will see Monsieur, your husband, at once," he said, in a tone calculated to nip every confidence in the bud. "I rejoice to hear that he has passed so good a day," he added, ironically, "it is not that which I should have expected."

"He has been quite gay," she declared, "more than once he has made jokes—something like he used to do before this dreadful illness. Come in, Monsieur, come in." She turned her face to him, and then it was, for the first time, that the doctor felt the intoxication of a friendly smile. There was affection, invitation, admiration in this, and even a touch of that which is called worship—she thought she was in the presence of Genius, of something far away and high above her. He shut his eyes for one moment, as if he were giddy, like one who has received a violent shock.

"To die is the common lot of all," he said, whispering.

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"But to save life is a glory for very few," she added, with another of those smiles that were so difficult to endure. "Ah, Monsieur, what a magnificent thing it is to possess such knowledge! Come in, you are ever welcome." She had no idea what she was saying, the words bubbled up to her lips and overflowed, the beauty of voice and face something to be remembered with awe.

They found Reginald Courtenay sitting up in his dressing-gown. A wood fire burned in the open hearth, for the invalid was cold at night.

"I have brought you this draught," said the doctor, sharply, "and you will take it directly you lie down for the night. You would be wise to retire at once, and if at any time you need me, there is a telephone downstairs connected with my abode. Madame, there is a telephone—I pray you not to forget it. I can be summoned at any moment of the night or day. I have no time now I will say au revoir." He was stammering and stumbling in his speech, but these people had not known him long enough to be astonished. "My time is of value to me Bon soir."

CHAPTER VII—*Under the Trees of Donvery*

AN old note-book lay open on Donald McGregor's knee. He had been looking through it this morning—an idle amusement, for what was the good of reviving ideas that would never be worked out? They stared at him out of the useless pages of his note-book—so much labour lost, so many observations wasted.

The great trees of Donvery made a canopy over the invalids. There were many seats placed under them, where one could breathe the good air without exertion, and find a public spot, or a quiet spot, as fancy directed, quite close to the Hotel. It was the favourite resort of the patients.

What a stupid thing it had been to go through his long, past struggle! He might just as well have elected to live quietly at home with the old parents, and saved himself the hardships at the beginning of nearly every literary career. What if success had come? What if this book of his would establish it? It was out, published by one of the leading firms. But the young author was sitting under the trees of Donvery, and it was the same to him as if no work of his had ever met with acceptance. Fame was a very empty re-

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ward, after all—here amongst the poor invalids of Donvery it appeared the most insignificant of all things—one year of health seemed more important than an immortal name!

“There,” said a voice, not far off, breaking into the young man’s gloomy thoughts, “do leave me alone. I’m better. I’m wonderful, but I must not talk. Why can’t you make friends with some of the people, instead of sitting there staring at me?”

“I will, Reggie, oh, certainly I will, if that would please you. I’m sorry if I have worried you by staring—but it is so astonishing to think that you are really better—I can hardly take my eyes away from your face.”

Donald heard, he was close, but he felt no concern—why should he? He saw Mrs. Courtenay rise out of one of the basket-chairs, that reminded him of Jonah’s gourd, from the way they curled up over the occupant to make a shelter from sun and wind. His eyes travelled indifferently to her face, and then suddenly his interest was arrested. The expression of joy on that face was almost supernatural.

She came to him, attracted by his regard, and sat down beside him on the garden seat, with a little deprecating gesture.

“Delightful spot—isn’t it?” said Donald.

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She turned, with a brilliant smile, unconscious of any irony in his remark.

"Yes, it is beautiful and delightful, a spot to be photographed on the memory." She spoke low, for she did not want to disturb her husband over there, and lately her voice had seemed to annoy him.

"Quite an ideal spot in which to die," said Donald.

"Oh, don't talk of dying here," she replied quickly, "it is the place to recover. Do you know, my husband was given up by a celebrated physician—he hid it from me, but I discovered it, and then I rested neither day nor night until I persuaded him to come to Dr. Deladoey, of whose genius I had heard, and now my husband says that Dr. Deladoey has promised to cure him in about a week."

"About a week!" echoed Donald, and then the spirit of irony took fuller possession of him. "Has he mentioned which day of the week your husband shall be cured?"

"Why, no; how could he? It might be only a day or two—at first he said that, but to-day, when I told my husband that he did not seem as much better as we might have expected, he said that the doctor thought now it would take a week. He is the most wonderfully clever doctor in the world,

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and I am not surprised that his reputation has spread across the ocean."

"He is pretty well known, I fancy," said Donald, "for even the English seem to have discovered him! Most of the European countries are represented here just now, I hear. It might be an interesting study of national character, but I don't think anyone in this place goes in for things of that sort."

"No, I don't expect we have time for such trifles," laughed his companion, "we are so occupied with baths and pulverisations and inhalations, not to mention the Treatment itself. But my husband is excused all that, he is to be cured another way."

"How? By an operation?" Donald leaned forward, and now his voice was sharp with interest.

"Oh, no; only by medicine, I fancy."

He dropped back again, with a short sigh.

"Have you ever noticed," she went on, presently, with a change of tone, "how illness alters the character?"

Donald felt her hungry look upon him, and remembered the face of her husband. He stared away into the trees, unwilling to meet her look.

"Yes," he said, "of course it does."

"Of course? Then you notice that, too?"

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Donald shuddered, his nerves jarred sharply in answer to her tone.

“When an instrument is out of tune,” he said, “it gives false notes in response to the touch—you can never judge a man by his behaviour in illness.”

“That’s just what I think myself,” she returned, gladly, “and when a man recovers health he is the same man you used to know before disease altered him?”

Donald stared harder than ever into the branches overhead.

“I am so delighted because you agree with me in that—everybody seems to think the same.” She smiled and nodded to him as she rose, being evidently in a mood too restless to sit long with anyone who was not her husband, and Donald watched her go. Of all the mysteries of human attraction he thought he had never stumbled upon one greater than that which had drawn Mrs. Courtenay to her marriage.

Someone was walking round with a determined step that seemed to defy anybody to interrupt it, like the March of Fate. It was so that the Circulator always took his surreptitious circuits out of the Salle d’Attente; one could almost tell by the defiant regularity of his footsteps that he ought to be sitting there, waiting for his turn, even without

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seeing his hatless condition. Mr. Derwent, having already paid his daily visit to the doctor, had come out to take the air, and he shot a quizzical glance at Donald, to see if he noticed the Circulator.

“Have you left your hat anywhere, Moosyer?”

The Circulator glared at him, and muttering something that sounded like, “Pardon, Monsieur, ne comprends pas,” he hurried on.

Donald did not smile at this small passage of arms, though he had himself heard the Circulator use very good English on occasions. But nothing daunted, Mr. Derwent came over and sat down by him, ever ready for a chat.

“How much longer do you intend to stay here?” he asked, preparing his pipe.

“Another week,” said Donald, with some enjoyment of the grim joke.

“Lucky devil, to get off so soon—I expect at least a fortnight, but naturally have not ventured to inquire into that detail. And now they’re cutting the grass the air will be full of that infernal fluff which gave me hay fever last year. There—I told you so. Look!”

Donald raised his eyes indifferently. A shower of fine, white fluff seemed rising from the ground. The swish of scythes was to be heard not far away, and somebody sneezed.

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“I told you so!” repeated Mr. Derwent, triumphantly. “Why don’t you smoke?”

“It’s bad for the throat.”

“H’m! But mosquitoes are bad for the complexion,” laughed Mr. Derwent. “Deladoey advises me to smoke as little as may be. I take his advice—I never smoke at meals. So you’re only booked for another week? How did you wring a date out of Deladoey?”

“He suggested it himself.”

“Upon my soul, a miracle! Shall you return next year? Most of us do; in fact, it becomes a rule of life or law of nature—eh?”

“No, I am exempt.”

Mr. Derwent waited until his pipe was properly started, then he turned to look questioningly at his companion. Something in the tone struck him as peculiar.

“Eh?”

“I’m to be finished off next week, in the cause of science, that’s all.”

“Don’t boast, my dear fellow,” said Mr. Derwent, “or dream of thwarting Deladoey in any of his little fancies. There’s not a man living who dare do it—it takes a child, and upon my word, I shouldn’t be surprised if she turned the tables on our mutual friend. There she is. I declare—she’s in hiding again this morning. We caught her

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yesterday, and got her in by a ruse, but she's too sharp for that trick to be repeated, and we've sent for her uncle, the only person who has ever been able to control her. I imagine he does it by threats of hell-fire. Do you know him? He writes tracts intended to scare people into Heaven by lively descriptions of everlasting, useless torments, detailed as by an eye-witness."

Donald was unresponsive.

"That young lady has a peculiar objection to electricity, hot or cold. Look at her—I adore girls of her age."

Donald took stock of little May Tempest, coming towards them through the trees. She paused at a safe distance, just where a ray of sunshine penetrated the great leaves above her, and struck gold all through her hair. She looked like a spirit or a nymph—but a very naughty one, and she held herself in readiness for flight at a moment's warning.

"Come along," called out Mr. Derwent, "we want you."

"Has he gone?" rang back the girl's voice.

"Who can you mean?" asked Mr. Derwent, "and by the way, why are you not in your place in the Salle d'Attente?"

May tossed her head.

"At least you ought to have a little considera-

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tion for your aunt's distress, which is enough to move a heart of stone. It has moved even mine."

"Then she ought to be very much obliged to me," retorted May.

"If I were you," continued the American rather hastily, "I wouldn't particularly care to meet the doctor again, after what has happened. Somehow, I don't feel jealous when I think of your next interview."

May's eyes had travelled away behind them towards the Hotel, and suddenly she put her finger to her lips and darted away. Donald caught the flash of a roguish glance. It was wellnigh irresistible.

The conversation and smoke combined had set him coughing, and he rose to find a seat elsewhere. Towards the Hotel he went, in the direction of May's glance, and in front of the building where the sunshine was blazing, with never a leaf to break the glare, he planted himself. Here he thought himself safe from molestation, for all other people were creeping into the shade.

"You have chosen a seat that may be warm enough," said a voice at his side, and the meaning of May's naughty look was clear.

"Good morning," returned Donald, in trepidation. He had fallen into a trap!

"You brought me no answer this morning. I

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was expecting to see you. Well? What shall it be?"

"It would be a pity to deprive you of the fun, Moosyou."

"The fun? Ah, yes, that would be a pity, for I find your case of interest, as a case, a general affair, in which you stand to me in the relation of an object, something upon which I may experiment. It would be a pity, as you say, to spoil my amusement. There is that other matter, too, with regard to your parents. From the little I know of nature, it appears to me that they might be aggrieved if—in case anything of a melancholy nature should occur to you, and "

The doctor affected a cold, and blew his nose with some violence before finishing his sentence.

"They were absent."

Donald frowned.

"Let me persuade you," said the doctor, laying his hand on Donald's shoulder. "I do not like for you to be here brooding alone, and, no doubt, taking too little care of yourself. It would be better, believe me, to summon Monsieur and Madame, and they would themselves prefer it. I, also, I would prefer it."

"It might be awkward for you if a stranger died under your hands, that's what you mean," interrupted Donald, excitedly.

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“As you will, as you will,” said the doctor. Donald looked at him, and over his mind swept a strange emotion.

“Moosyou, you are my friend.”

“Not at all,” cried Dr. Deladoey, hastily removing his fingers, “not so, I am no man’s friend.”

“Then why do you trouble yourself about whether I have my parents here?”

“For the reason that you have yourself proposed. I do not care for the responsibility if—anything should happen. I should be at the pain, the inconvenience of communicating with your friends. That is a task not pleasant to me. You are at this moment sitting in a position unadvisable; take my command, and return to the shelter of the trees.”

“One cannot be certain of being left alone in there,” muttered Donald.

“And what for should you wish to be left alone? Why should you persist in opportunity for brooding? You English are so difficult, you cannot understand reason!” With that he wheeled round and departed, kicking the gravel savagely before him.

Donald stood still a few moments, watching the doctor go, and then he returned slowly to the shelter of the trees, as directed. It was not un-

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like a revival of the old slavery of schoolboy days—but strange to say, he did not find it unpleasant, with the Specialist as schoolmaster. One of the ladies was imparting news to a group of friends.

“He has been there for the last ten minutes,” she was saying, “talking to Mr. McGregor. I saw him come out of the Hotel, and he went straight to where Mr. McGregor was sitting—they’re there now, chatting like bosom friends. We have known Dr. Deladoey for five years, and it is the first time I ever saw him speak to one of his patients outside the *Salle de Consultation*.”

There was a curious look in Donald’s eyes as he passed on, unseen. It was almost like exultation.

“Cahn you tell me—did I leave it here?” asked the Count, stopping Donald, eagerly.

“What was it, Moosyou?”

The old gentleman looked distressed.

“I cahn not remember, I haf forgotten.”

“In that case,” said Donald, “if I see anything lying about, I’ll think of you.”

“Ah, yes; I sank you a t’ousand times. You are so good.”

Donald looked hard into the old man’s face. He could read nothing but agitation and eagerness there, none of the calm that is supposed to follow a finished career. Perhaps the Count was

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as reluctant as he to let the curtain drop. Was no man ever ready?

Donald went on.

He came upon little May Tempest, in the long grass. She was half sitting, half kneeling, and had a lapful of flowers, which she was making into bouquets. She glanced suspiciously at Donald, and then gave him the full benefit of her blue eyes.

“Has that horrid doctor gone yet?” she asked, cautiously.

“Yes; you’re quite safe this time.”

“Did you know how mean Gustave and Mr. Derwent were yesterday? They actually invented a lie, a really wicked lie—they went and told me that he never burned anyone on Thursdays, because his battery needed rest, and that all the patients looked forward to Thursday with joy, and were extra gay because they knew he wouldn’t hurt them a bit that day—and when I got to the Salle d’Attente, they were all laughing at some stupid joke, and I thought it must be true about the battery—but I’m never going to believe another word that either of them says again. I’ll never believe any man—never.”

“Oh, don’t say that,” returned Donald, with a little pang. “There are some men who would be ashamed of deceiving you.”

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“Yes,” answered May, eyeing him frankly, “I think you would, but you are the only man I shall ever believe. I went in with Aunt Alice yesterday, and that doctor got me behind his curtain, and he did me first, so I hadn’t time to find out what a lie they had told me, and I asked Dr. Deladoey whether he was going to hurt me, and he said, not at all, it would grieve him to hurt me—or some other silly nonsense like that, and then he went and burnt me with a tool, that went red-hot the moment he pressed a little spring—and when I was too amazed even to scream, he said that next time he would do my throat, for a variety . . . but there shall be no next time until my Uncle Edward comes, I can tell you!”

“What difference will that make?” asked Donald.

“Oh, he’ll force me to go to that abominable Treatment. He’s coming to-morrow, and there’ll be no fun here any longer—he’s just as mad on going to the doctor as Aunt Alice, but as for that, everybody here seems the same. I can’t imagine what possesses them—they are quite excited when they’ve had something done to them a little worse than usual—it’s perfectly sickening to hear them describing to each other all the horrid details of that doctor’s odious Treatment. And you should see how proud they are if they’ve gone

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through anything especially awful. I'd rather die, myself, than live here much longer."

"Supposing you really had to die, how should you like it?" questioned Donald.

She made a comical grimace, and then, opening her eyes wide, told him merrily that she was much too young to die, and couldn't think of doing such a thing.

"There is a man here," said Donald, "who is barely thirty, and he was told the other day that he'd have to die."

"When?" asked May, laughing. The anecdote amused her.

"Probably next week."

"What is he?"

"An author."

"How funny," cried May. "I'll tell you a secret—I'm going to be an author!" She threw her head back, and gazed proudly at him. Donald looked down at her, and felt himself very old.

"What is that author's name?" she asked.

"Donald McGregor."

"Oh—you mean yourself?"

"I do."

"What a funny way you have of telling things, Mr. McGregor; no one would have thought you meant yourself. Doesn't it seem rather ridiculous to be going to die so soon?"

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“I had not before regarded it as exactly ridiculous,” he returned, a smile coming at last, “but I can see that you are a philosopher, Miss Tempest. Death does not strike you as a very serious affair. No doubt you are perfectly right—it is only one of those trifles that may happen to interfere with a career—that’s all.”

“Oh, I don’t understand all that,” laughed May, “and it’s stupid to talk about gloomy things. Look—there’s Mr. Derwent teasing the new patient. Aunt Alice is not with him, she’s up in her room crying because she cannot manage me, and then he’ll have to comfort her all afternoon. That man who has just come is named Mr. Crabbe; I saw it on his portmanteau, and he had a neat linen cover on it, just like an Old Maid’s. Look, he’s carrying about a shawl—did you ever know anything so absurd as for a man to molly-coddle himself like that?”

“Perhaps Mr. Crabbe is ill,” suggested Donald, “men sometimes are.”

May laughed still more merrily.

“Do let us go and hear what Mr. Derwent’s saying to him,” she begged, “it’s such fun to hear him frightening people. Come with me, Mr. McGregor, do,” she coaxed.

She sprang up, and all her flowers tumbled out of her lap, disregarded. Donald followed. It was

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good to see something so young and bright, it was pleasant to be drawn after her backward glances, inviting and entreating him to stay with her.

Mr. Derwent, who was holding forth to an interested little group of patients, appeared unconscious of the addition to his auditors. He seemed wholly absorbed in the task of reassuring the timid newcomer.

“There is nothing really unbearable in the Treatment,” he was saying, and in her delight May took Donald’s arm and pinched it. “One gets perfectly used to the sensation, though just at first, I grant you, it is rather unpleasant; in fact, the taste for it is decidedly an acquired taste. But even children are able to endure the red-hot wire; there is one here now, little Miss May Tempest, who goes to her Treatment as she would go to the theatre.”

“I don’t mind it in the very least,” piped up May, indignantly, “and I’m not a child.”

“Oh, are you there?” asked Mr. Derwent, with extravagant surprise. “That was what I was saying, of course you don’t mind it, which you prove by your enthusiastic regularity in the Salle d’Attente.”

“I haven’t been there quite always, simply to tease Aunt Alice, and for fun,” retorted May, “and I think you’d better go and comfort her now, Mr.

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Derwent, as you generally do whenever she's depressed about me."

"Does this Dr. Deladoey diet his patients?" asked the newcomer. "I make a great point of diet."

"Well, truth to tell," returned Mr. Derwent, showing pleasure in the change of subject, "I must confess that he's lax in that particular."

"Then I don't think much of him."

"He's a first-rate operator," put in another voice.

"I don't believe in operations," asserted Mr. Crabbe, "they are dangerous and unnatural. Nature teaches us that the only way of getting cured is by diet; diet is everything, as I shall tell the doctor to-morrow—and unless he agrees with me, I shall not believe in him."

"On the whole, I think you and Dr. Deladoey won't get on together," remarked Mr. Derwent, chuckling.

Donald turned away.

What was this weight that oppressed him? He found it difficult to hold up his head, and a horrible feeling of loneliness overtook him. These people, so full of their trifling ailments and insignificant interests, were not comrades for him now. He was going forward alone into the darkness, and all that was bright and beautiful he seemed to

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be leaving behind him. That young girl—he could hear her voice raised in some fresh repartee as he left the group. How light her footstep, tripping irresponsibly through life! How he admired her merry, naughty, innocent face, her sunny curls, her gift of compelling all things to happen as she wished! But it was better to turn his back upon the fascinating vision—the horrible Reality she ignored was driving him away from these people who had never faced it. He found a secluded spot, where there were several seats, and dropped into one without noticing that someone else occupied another.

CHAPTER VIII—*The Decision*

THE birds above, the sunshine all around, that brilliant sky, and everything in nature harped aloud of joy and hope—but Donald McGregor knew nothing except that he was sinking rapidly into despair.

He was aroused out of this dark absorption by a voice. He looked up vacantly, and then suddenly revived. It was his friend of the road to the Beer Garden, and she was asking him how he was this morning. The sympathy and concern in her tones came to his heart like a breath of Home.

“I’m rather tired,” he said, with an awakening smile, “but what else can I expect?”

“Don’t you feel any better?”

“No; I never shall.”

She came over to the seat beside his. A steady purpose shone from her eyes, and Donald looked appealingly towards them.

“I feel scarcely capable of making a decision, in my present state,” he said, and his voice trembled. “Unfortunately, I must. But the moment I try, my brain whirls.”

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"That is weakness," she answered, "and it is very trying. I am so sorry that you should have anything to worry you just now."

Donald found, to his dismay, that these simple words were bringing tears into his eyes. He was scarcely prepared for genuine sympathy, and when it was offered to him thus it almost unmanned him. Her voice seemed to remind him of his mother's, as it sounded to his ears in childhood.

"Could I possibly help you, do you think?"

He turned to her eagerly.

"You might help me to decide."

"I will, indeed, if I can. What is it that you have to decide?"

"It is whether to have this operation or not."

"What operation?" she asked, anxiously.

"Didn't you know? I quite thought I told you. It is one proposed by Dr. Deladoey, of such peculiar interest to science that he calls it worthy of a martyr, and pants to be at it at once. He has given me to understand plainly enough that he thinks it will be fatal, and for that reason he declines the responsibility of advising me to undergo it, but yet he urges it, for it isn't likely that he'll get another opportunity of the same sort, you know."

Helen stared at him in consternation, and her look recalled him.

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"I am not sure," he said, "that it would not be an honour to die under such hands."

"What is the alternative, supposing you refuse?"

"A much slower death, but one that is certain."

"Do you mean that there is no possibility of recovering without the operation?"

"None whatever. I know that myself without all the persuasion he considers necessary. He is bringing down a physician from Lausanne to convince me of what I already know. If it pleases him I won't oppose him, because now there is no need to economise."

"But is there not a chance of recovery—in that operation?"

"Deladoey thinks not."

"And apart from it, there is no hope, no chance?"

"None whatever; only it would not be so soon."

Helen rose and walked a little way off, keeping her back to him. She heard his dry, annoying cough, she was conscious all the time of his impatience when fighting against it, of his anxious desire to speak more fully to her. Something about Donald was rousing within her a feeling so strong that she could scarcely trust herself to speak. What a shocking thing it seemed that this man, in his splendid youth, with all the prom-

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ises of life before him, should be mown down ruthlessly, unfulfilled! The scythe of God is as pitiless as the scythe of man, swishing its way through the beautiful long grass of Donvery.

“You would choose the operation,” said Donald, his eyes fastened on the motionless figure over there. “To you, death is the most desirable of all things. I acknowledge, I own frankly, that to me—it is not.”

“But the life of pain . . . ?”

“It is all that I have.”

He saw that she shuddered.

The scythe of man pursued its way. The grass of Donvery lay in heaps all along its track, reminding one of a cemetery. They could see the reaper out there in the hot sun. He had stopped to sharpen his scythe.

“Is there not one small chance of recovery in that operation?” She seemed to be entreating the reaper, upon whom she had fixed her eyes.

“The fraction of a chance, I suppose,” answered Donald, from behind.

“I should be inclined to take the chance.”

Helen’s heart thumped painfully as she said the words.

“Then that is settled.”

She turned, with a violent start, facing Donald once again.

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"I mean to follow your advice," he added, gravely. "It takes my fancy that I like to have my fate decided so. Now, there is another little matter."

Helen dropped into her seat beside him. She felt a new, strange sensation, almost as if she were faint.

"It is about my parents. They know nothing whatever of this business; they fancy that I have come here for pleasure. I am their only son. I have hidden from them everything in my life that could distress or vex them. I should like to tell you about my parents, Miss Lester——"

"Do," she asked. He seemed to want her permission.

"I must tell you that they are very proud of me," he continued, with a deprecating little smile. "I was born long after they had ceased to expect this blessing of the Lord, and perhaps that is why they always regarded me as something quite unusual; in fact, I happen to know that they imagine they have had the privilege of producing a master-mind, and so they gave me as a gift to the world, and are under the impression that their beloved and only son is making a fame about equal to that of his countryman, Sir Walter Scott."

Here he paused to laugh, but Helen did not join him.

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“What have you written?” she asked.

“My first book is just out,” he returned. “Except for that, I have produced nothing except newspaper articles, most of which met with prompt and decided refusal from the misguided race of Editors. It is simply a joke to me now —you must not look at me reproachfully, because I cannot help laughing at my blunders, the chief of which was a sort of unacknowledged belief in my own powers.”

“Who published your book?”

He named the firm.

“There must be something in that book,” said Helen, “or it would not have been published by that firm. I think your parents are probably right.”

Donald was smitten dumb for a few moments.

“You say you have not told them of your illness. Surely, that is a mistake?”

“Perhaps, but I am cowardly. Little though I deserve it, I am the object of a love that passeth the understanding. And now, I do not care to deal this blow.”

There was the sound of a sob, but when he looked, in some consternation, at his companion, she was gazing before her, tearless.

“They are old and weak and inexperienced. But if they knew, they, who have never crossed the border, would come to me at once. How could I

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allow them to travel all this way in order to condemn them to the conflicting agonies of hope and despair?"

"If I were a mother," whispered Helen, speaking to herself, "I would rather go to my child at any cost." He heard her.

A long silence fell between them. They neither moved nor spoke, but it is in such silences that soul meets soul. He brought it to an end. He came and took her hand.

"Thank you, Miss Lester," was all he said, and then she watched him move slowly away under the trees. The wind stirred in their branches, the big leaves seemed to clap their hands, the sunbeams played at hide-and-seek amongst them. Helen knew that he had gone to write the letter that would bring his parents here, and she sat immovable, for long.

The pressure of his hand lingered about her, the look of his eyes became a memory that would never pass. This was only her second conversation with him, and that had come to pass which Helen used to think impossible. The agony of her pity had suddenly and violently aroused the passion of her heart. Helen did not hide it from herself that her reason, her mind, her intellect were overpowered by a new, terrible love that swept away every other sensation. She was

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shocked by the force and the anguish of this new feeling. It was unreasonable. She was older than Donald, she had been in the School of Experience long enough to be beyond the reach of such folly, she was the last person in the world to allow herself thus to be overcome by an instinct she had always regarded with pity and contempt, thinking that it belonged to all that was purely animal in man, who was intended to be Godlike. And now she recognised how utterly she had fallen from her own ideal.

“Surely, I had enough to bear, without this,” said Helen, looking wildly up into the giant trees. “God—God, had I not enough?”

How long was it that she sat there, struggling in vain with the overwhelming torment of her mind? Several people passed her, unnoticed, and none knew that the motionless figure was going through a tempest of fierce, intolerable mental agony, so little can we approach each other down here in the world. The old Polish Count came and asked her what time it was, and went away without an answer, before she had quite taken in that anyone spoke to her. The time? Was there such a thing?

May came tripping by, bent on mischief. As she approached, a violent shudder ran through Helen.

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“Have you seen my aunt, and Mr. Derwent?” giggled May, running up to her.

Helen shook her head.

“If I were Aunt Alice,” confided May, “I’d be ashamed of allowing a man to make such fun of me, but she thinks he says it all in serious earnest! Aunt Alice has fallen in love,” concluded this young wiseacre, with scorn and contempt.

Helen cowered under the child’s piercing eyes.

“Did you ever know anything so silly in all your life?” asked May; “and at her age, too!”

“Do not be unkind to your aunt,” said Helen, feeling as if she pleaded for herself. “It is not all happiness to fall in love.”

“Well,” concluded May, “I’d be ashamed of myself if I ever went and made such a silly of myself as that.”

She was off, in search of someone a little more interesting, and Helen sat still, the words ringing in her ears like an accusation.

Then came Madame Roulet, shaking her troublesome little son, and scolding him in a high-pitched voice. Helen’s eyes rested blankly on these two, who here expressed the most romantic relationship of life—mother and child. Madame Roulet certainly did not realise anything especially romantic in her position towards Louis, which chiefly consisted in correcting him with

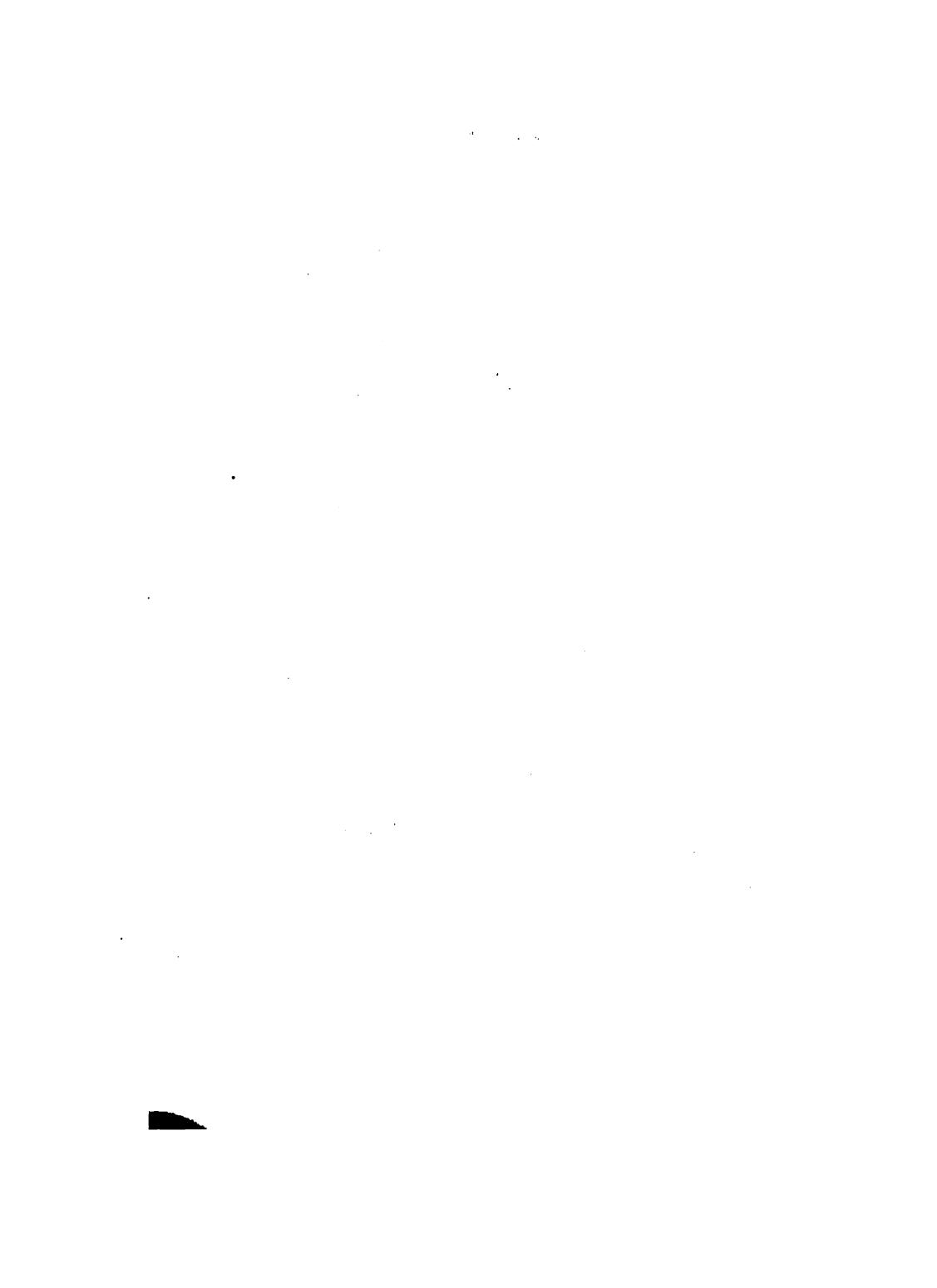
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vigour, that was rewarded by no success, or in weeping because she could not control him. A great pang went through Helen's tender heart—the pain and disappointment of everything belonging to our life down here seemed to her at that moment so unmeaning.

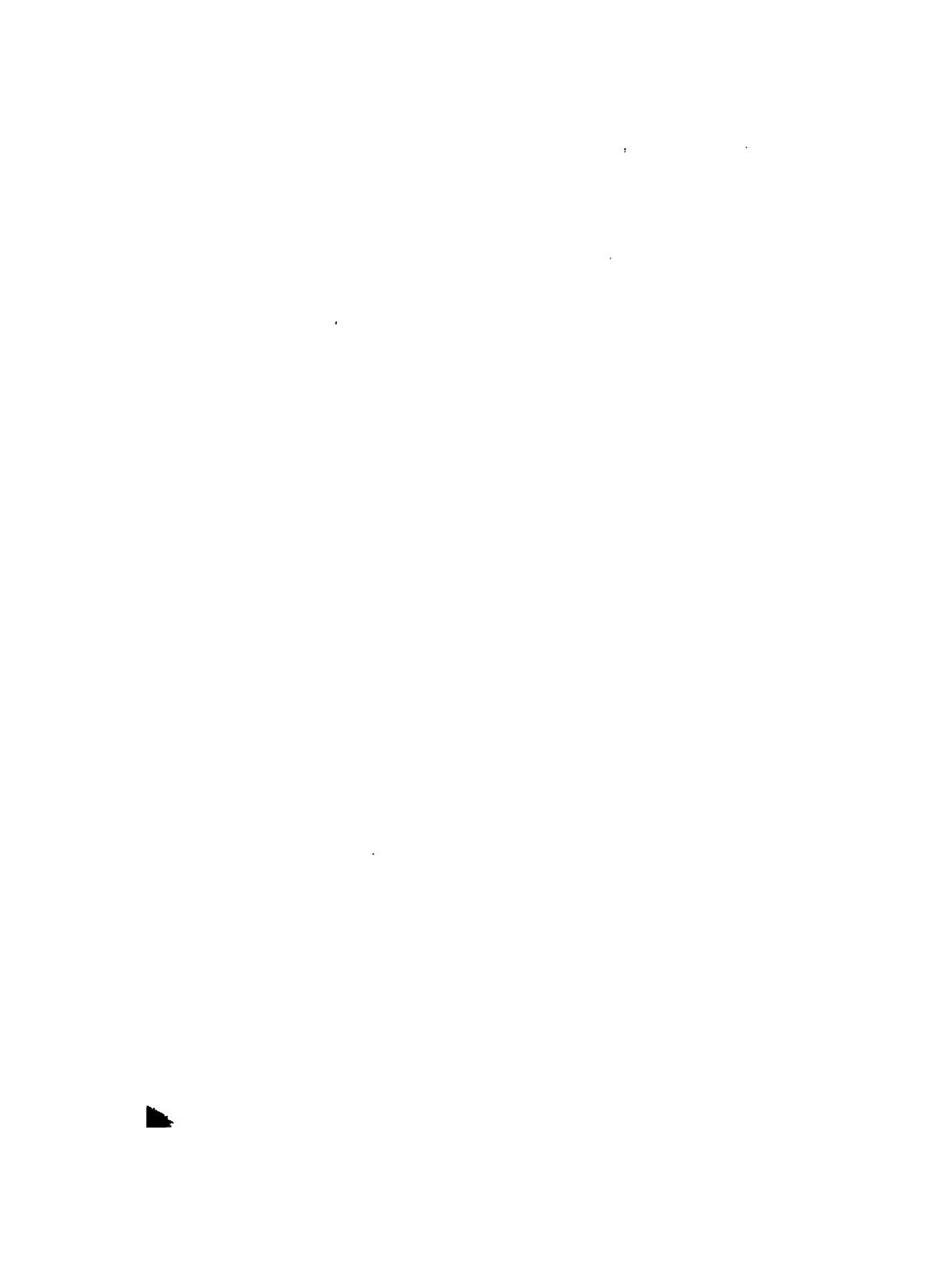
At a little distance she could see a Russian, who, with charming unconventionality, had been riding his bicycle in his shirt-sleeves, and had evidently made himself a mark for the disapproval of a group of English ladies. Helen saw them drawing away, and heard the word "Outrageous!"

The whole stream of human life flowed on before her mental vision. She thought she would never again be able to mingle with the far-away, dream-like figures, that she must be separated forever from her kind by virtue of this which had changed the current of her life.

The electric bell began its lively summons to Table d'Hôte, and Helen caught sight of her father, glancing furtively about the grounds. She sprang up, shaken roughly out of her black trance into the blacker realities of her every-day existence.



PART II
THE DAY OF REST



CHAPTER I—*Getting Rid of a Disease*

IT was Sunday—a wasted day at Donvery, as was generally felt by the patients, for there was no Treatment. Dr. Deladoey took the orthodox holiday, and unless in urgent cases, he never appeared at the Hotel. So his arrival this morning created quite a thrilling sense of excitement amongst the patients. Which of them could require this unwonted attention?

Mr. Edward Dopping had arrived the evening before, and had promptly begun his yearly good work at Donvery. Accordingly, when he, with May after him (sulky and unwilling), met the doctor in the passage, he had the temerity to stop him.

“Before I come to you for bodily Treatment, Mongsere,” said he, “allow me to present you with something that may be medicine to your immortal soul,” and he put a tract into the doctor’s hand.

Dr. Deladoey stood looking at this old patient of his as if he failed to recognise him, and Mr. Dopping suddenly hurried on.

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“Burn that instead of me, to-morrow, Muss-you!” murmured May, then decamped after her uncle, who had looked round and called her testily.

The ghost of a smile flitted across Dr. Deladoey's face, as he thrust the missive of religion into his pocket, but he was now at the door of No. 25.

“Entrez!”

Mrs. Courtenay started when she saw who had come. What could the doctor want to-day?

“Monsieur?”

“Bon jour, Madame; how is Monsieur your husband?”

“I cannot believe that he is—quite as he ought to be,” she answered. “He has been complaining of feeling chilly, and yet everyone thinks it is like the tropics; they say they never remembered such weather here in early June, and a multitude of mosquitoes has appeared; one lady killed fifty on her window last night I cannot understand why my husband should feel chilly.”

“Who are you talking to out there, Constance? Why can't you come in and shut the door?”

Mrs. Courtenay's eyes met the doctor's. He motioned her aside, and went in.

“What sort of a night, Monsieur?”

“He was coughing incessantly,” answered the wife, “but he told me it was a good sign; he

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said he was getting rid of his disease by the cough."

"And so I am," burst out Mr. Courtenay, "as fast as possible." He glared threateningly at the doctor. "I shall be rid of it altogether in a day or two; every fit of coughing brings that happy consummation nearer Good Lord, a fit's coming!"

The doctor stood and watched him through. He never once glanced at Mrs. Courtenay, but kept her away while he attended to the patient.

There was a serious haemorrhage, and then Mr. Courtenay lay back, with closed eyes, gasping.

"This is the third in twenty-four hours," exclaimed the poor young wife, her eyes full of tears; "and the pain is terrible."

The patient moved angrily.

"Can nothing be done to ease him?"

Dr. Deladoey put out his hand to keep her away. He had taken something from his pocket. She could not see what was going on, but after a time there came a deep sigh of relief, and she heard her husband whisper, "Thanks." In another few minutes he had fallen into a profound slumber.

"Is that all right?" breathed Mrs. Courtenay, compelling the doctor to attend to her. She even took his arm to enforce attention.

He looked down a moment into her dilated eyes,

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and it would be hard to say whose face was the paler at that moment—the face of the dying man, or of either of the two who stood by.

“Madame, it is better than suffering.”

Her hand still clutched his arm. The doctor stood as if some force in nature petrified him.

“I am not able to tell—I—I feel as if I am being deceived. All my joy in the belief that my husband is recovering has gone away—there is nobody in the world in whom I can believe.”

The Specialist stood staring at his patient. There were no tears in his eyes; they were keen and piercing as usual. Was he not a genius, with no heart?

“Ought he to sleep like that?” she persisted.

“Sleep is good,” said the doctor, suddenly stirring to disengage himself from her petrifying touch, which had become intolerable. He looked hard at the face of that dying man. Was it possible that anyone on earth could see it, and not know?

“And do you think it is all right, Monsieur?”

“It is that which I expect . . . Madame, there is a telephone.”

She stood gazing, with dilated eyes, at her husband. When next she spoke to the doctor, there was no answer. She looked up to repeat her everlasting question, and found that he had left her

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alone with her trouble. Whatever happened now, she was alone and unassisted. A horrible fear seized her heart, and then she remembered something he had said—"There is a telephone."

Now she knew what that meant.

CHAPTER II—*Inspiration*

INSTEAD of leaving the Hotel, Dr. Deladoey ascended the stairs to the next floor, and stood rapping imperatively at another door.

He was bidden to enter by a voice which made no attempt to disguise the fact that an interruption was not welcome, but the Specialist cared nothing for that. He found Donald McGregor sitting before a typewriter.

The young author had been seized with an impulse to work. From the moment that his fate was definitely decided he had felt something like a passion to leave behind him in the world some trace of his existence. It was inspiration—he felt no fatigue, he was almost unconscious of physical conditions. He knew that he was producing the best work that could ever proceed from him. The peculiar circumstances under which he worked brought out of his brain some ideas that he knew were both uncommon and powerful. Page after page had been rolling through the machine.

“Ah!” said the doctor, “so this is the way I find you taking care of yourself. I feel inclined, my friend, to throw your typewriter with some velocity out of the window. In this way you

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make my efforts on your behalf of no avail. What for should you be so foolish? I am angry, and I have a right to be angry."

"There is one piece of work for me to do before I kick the bucket," returned Donald, "and do it I will. Who cares if it does hasten matters? My name and reputation are dear to me, now that they are the only hostages I can leave behind me."

"I cannot tell what this expression you use signifies," interrupted the doctor, "but you shall do no work, or I give up your case. Kick the bucket—or me—or anything you like, but you shall not work. Kick your own heels, which is another of your idioms, if you feel inclined. I care not what you kick Have you made your decision?"

"Yes. I will have the operation."

The doctor's face did not brighten up, as Donald resentfully expected. Instead, it became a shade graver.

"And I have sent for my parents. They will get here by Thursday. There is nothing that I have not done. I have obeyed your whims and fancies down to the very letter. We will have the despatch on Saturday."

"How? The despatch? What is that?"

"My despatch—your scientific experiment. Call it the operation, if you like."

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“Very good.”

“I must insist upon keeping to the outside limit of time that you gave me. It leaves me just one week of life. There are many thoughts that pass through a man’s brain in the course of a week.”

“Very good.”

Donald stared at his typewriter.

“I have forbidden you to write,” said the doctor, sharply, “and I will be obeyed.”

“Do not feel agitated, Moosyou; you’ve driven away the inspiration, more’s the pity.”

“No such thing. That inspiration was but the effect of unnatural excitement. Had you been a young lady I should have called it hysteria. We want no inspiration here; pulverisation and inhalation are more appropriate—they soothe, while inspiration ruffles. It is your duty to be calm, and take your medicine, your physic. You will also attend the pulverisations each day. What can I do amongst patients who will not obey me? It is enough to drive me out of my sanity, and you, that I thought had some sense, unwinding that which I wound up, by this folly which you term inspiration.”

“Is that folly?” asked Donald, pushing a newly written page towards the Specialist.

There was silence, and presently the doctor threw down the page impatiently.

Inspiration

"I have no time for reading the productions of every one of my patients," he said, pulling out of his pocket the tract he had been offered that morning, which bore upon its title page the name of Edward Dopping. "Here is another, and I will not be pestered thus. I make you a present of this little document, in the hope, the expectation, that you may derive more benefit from a contemplation of another man's writings than from committing the folly of increasing the number of your own."

"All right, Moosyou, you shall have your way—as usual."

"Yes, I will have my way, or I undertake no case. You had better go out and drink a glass of sulphur water, and it will do you no harm to remain in the fresh air so long as the sun shines, but I do not mean to advise, what no doubt you might imagine, with your inspirations, that you should go beyond the grounds."

"Why not, Moosyou?"

"Because, when the storm appears, you would be drenched to the skin, and that would be more deleterious even than an inspiration."

"The storm!" said Donald, ironically. "How are you going to get up a storm with that sky?"

Dr. Deladoey stood at the window. The sky was deep and blue, the sun was shining in un-

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broken glory. An intense calm had fallen upon nature. Man seemed to have ceased from the earth. The only sound was an almost imperceptible stirring along the ground, a sound of growing grass, of bursting buds, of very small things breathing. One might hear it by leaning close to the ground. On such a day it seems as if another world, existing within this one we know, has made itself apparent.

"I do not recommend that you should travel far from shelter this day," said Dr. Deladoey, positively. "I find it necessary to be explicit."

"Something has upset you; what is it?" asked Donald, venturing with extraordinary temerity to approach the doctor's forbidden paths.

Dr. Deladoey glanced at him, with an appearance of suspicion.

"Tell me," said Donald. "Come, sit down and have a chat. My throat's all right to-day, you needn't pretend that it's bad for it."

"I have no time," said the Specialist. "I came but to inform you that Monsieur Duval, the physician from Lausanne, will be at my house in the town at three o'clock this afternoon, and that you will be there punctually to meet him."

"I thought I wasn't to go beyond the grounds to-day," retorted Donald, "because of that storm, you know. It might drench me to the skin

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There, Moosyou, forgive me. I will be at your house in town punctually to the minute, storm or no storm, if you'll sit down and talk to me now. It isn't fair to deprive a fellow of his occupation, and then leave him alone to mope."

"I have no time," repeated the Specialist but he sat down.

"One of your cases going wrong?" ventured Donald.

"It is not that; nothing is happening but that which I knew was inevitable. Only you English are so difficult."

"Which of us is it this time? Won't little Miss Tempest go for her Treatment? Never mind, Moosyou, her uncle arrived last night, and for some occult reason he is able to insure her regularity in that matter."

Dr. Deladoey looked annoyed, and would not respond.

"Then it's someone else?"

"I never discuss my cases."

Donald asked no more questions. He knew better than to press the point, for he wanted the doctor to stay. He was regarding him now with a peculiar look. So long as that keen, forbidding face was near, he felt as if father, mother, sister and brother were with him. It was unaccountable.

"You, hiding it from your parents; Monsieur

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Courtenay, concealing it from his wife—all the same, you English and Americans and Scottish are so difficult!” burst out the doctor. “And how am I to tell her, who thinks her husband, whom she loves, is every day recovering, while I know, and he knows, that he is even now dying? One more haemorrhage is enough. These wives, they are so blind, so foolish; another would understand. Why should she be thus demented?”

“They are all the same,” said Donald, contemptuously, and checked himself. “At least, most of them. I know one woman who is worth talking to.”

Dr. Deladoey eyed him askance.

“By the way, her father is a patient of yours. What’s the matter with the fellow? I never saw a more restless, unsociable kind of man. He speaks to no one, but absorbs his daughter’s whole time and attention in a thoroughly reprehensible fashion. I refer to Mr. Lester.”

“He has come to me to be fortified against malarial fever, which he gets in India,” answered Dr. Deladoey, stolidly. “He is on a furlough.”

“Is that all that’s wrong with him?”

“I am busy, I have no time to stay here talking,” cried the doctor. “Au revoir. You will be at my house at three o’clock.”

“There, I’ve driven him away,” muttered Donald, looking blankly at the door.

CHAPTER III—*Pulverisation*

“MAY, are you attending?”

“Oh, yes,” answered May, in a low voice. She was sitting on a stool before the empty fireplace, and her uncle could not see her face. He was reading aloud to her and his sister. They had begun the Day of Rest with a little private Service of their own, and were going, later on, to the Eglise Libre. Mr. Dopping had left the Church of England, having found far more correct doctrines in his personal study of the Epistles, and he could not conscientiously attend any orthodox Church, in any country, or permit others to do so.

“We are commanded to come out of her, and be separate,” said he, “and we have done it—at least, your Aunt Alice and I have obeyed, but you, May, with your father, are still in the toils of her bondage.”

May glanced at her watch, which she held concealed in her hand. These private services generally lasted twenty minutes. Her uncle now returned to his tract.

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“ ‘There are before you *two* deaths. The first, that of the body, which will be buried and eaten of worms, but will afterwards rise again and be condemned to the SECOND DEATH, the death eternal of the soul, a death of everlasting, outrageous torment, in fire that never will be quenched.’ ”

“What’s the good of it?” asked May.

“The good of what?”

“Burning in Hell forever and ever.”

“It is not for us to ask what good it is—we know it for a fact, and as we know that pain cannot cause true repentance, common sense as well as the Inspired Word convinces us that once in Hell, you will never get out of it.”

“Then I don’t see the good of going there,” persisted May.

“You will go there, all the same.”

“I don’t believe it is this body that I’ve got now which will go there.”

“It is—that identical body.”

“But Mr. Derwent told me that every seven years it is all changed, so if I live seven more years, it won’t be the same body I’ve got now.”

“May, don’t dare to trifling with a subject so infinitely solemn.”

“I am not trifling, Uncle Edward. I’m only trying to find out the truth. You say that this

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body will rise again, after it has been eaten by worms, and I don't see how that's possible. Besides, Mr. Derwent said that a lot of the body evaporates in gas after it's buried, and a lot of it goes into plants, and all the vegetables that we eat, and the air that we breathe, are composed of dead bodies. So we actually eat our ancestors. That means that my present body is all of it made up of other people, and if they all rise again, I don't suppose there'll be a bit of me left to go to Hell."

"And you actually believe a word Mr. Derwent says?" stormed Uncle Edward.

"He wasn't joking that time," declared May. "And he said a lot more that was *scientific*." She lingered affectionately over that last word—it sounded so well!

"Science has always been opposed to true religion," announced Mr. Dopping, in the tone of one who understood both.

"But, Edward," pleaded his sister, listening harder and harder, "there are some men of science who are truly religious."

"Yes," piped up May, "Mr. Derwent, for instance."

"Let us return to our subject," interrupted Mr. Dopping. He felt no interest in discussing the opinions of Mr. Derwent—his own were (or

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ought to be) of more importance to these young women. " 'You will be condemned to Hell,' " he continued, evidently addressing May exclusively.

May hid her face.

"To Hell," he repeated, still more solemnly, and paused.

During the impressive silence that followed he watched her with enthusiasm. Surely she was impressed at last!

"Did you write that tract yourself, Uncle Edward?"

"I did," he answered, cordially; "do you like it?"

"Yes," said May; "I think it is a beautiful tract, and it has put an idea into my head. I'm going to write one, too."

"What? You are going to write one?"

"Yes," said May.

"Authorship is evidently in the blood," said Mr. Dopping, turning to his sister. "And now, I should like to hear you recite that little hymn of yours, which Mr. Derwent admired."

Alice Dopping started, and gazed at her brother, quivering with a delicious thrill.

"Did you say—Mr. Derwent—admired it, Edward?"

"Yes. I asked him what he thought of it, and he said that he considered it on a par with Mrs.

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Alexander's, or that exquisite poetess, Frances Ridley Havergal's."

May sighed, and her aunt began, in a trembling voice :

“ ‘Is thy spirit faint and weary?
Is the world too wild and dreary?
Let the Voice Divine and holy,
As it whispers softly near thee,
In thy misery console thee.

‘Then, in all thy sorrow singing,
To that hope so happy clinging,
In it all thy efforts doubling,
Thou shalt hear thy welcome ringing
Where the wicked cease from troubling.’ ”

The service had lasted twelve minutes now—and the tract was not half done!

“What do you think of that, May?” questioned her uncle.

“I like your tract better,” answered this diplomatic young lady; “please go on with it.”

He was pleased; there was something genuine and sweet about these words. He resumed the reading.

“ ‘You will be condemned to Hell, to the everlasting torments of the devil and his angels, and

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the smoke of your torment—yours—will arise forever. There will be no hope, and no relaxation of pain. With an imperishable body, you will burn throughout eternity—and burning is the most acute suffering that is known. Therefore, repent before it is too late."

"Oh, Uncle Edward, I forgot, I have to go to my pulverisation, and that is always at ten o'clock on Sundays, so that the patients may have time to go to church after it is over."

"Surely you do not go to the pulverisations on the Sabbath day?"

"Yes, I have to, the doctor ordered it," answered May. She had not spoken very loud, and her aunt was still absorbed in contemplation (Mr. Derwent had admired her hymn!).

"Why, where has May gone?" she asked, suddenly becoming aware of a shutting door.

"To the pulverisations," answered her brother. "I do not approve of it to-day, and shall speak to the doctor, but of course it won't do for me to interfere if he really considers them necessary."

"May gone to the pulverisations?" queried Miss Dopping, in a puzzled voice. "I can hardly believe it. She wouldn't go all last week because she said it was impossible to sit for twenty minutes before a spray with her mouth wide open,

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and I couldn't make her go. What a comfort it is to have someone whose authority she recognises here!"

"Do you mean that she has never been before?"

"Only once, the first time, and Margueritte kept her there by force the whole twenty minutes, and she declared nothing should induce her to go near the place—or the woman—again."

"In that case," sternly pronounced Uncle Edward, "she shall not go to-day, but she shall begin them regularly to-morrow," and he flung open the door. "May!"

There was no answer. Once outside, May had flown like a bird; she had already turned the corner of the long passage and was down the first flight of stairs with one bound. In another minute she arrived breathlessly in the pulverisation chamber, where the woman Margueritte was tying mackintoshes round the necks and arms of her victims.

"Do me next, Margueritte," gasped May, thrusting herself upon the woman. "If you don't, I shall never, never come here any more."

The woman grinned, and since no one was in a hurry to start the tedious business, she was willingly given precedence. Donald McGregor had just come in, and he brightened visibly. He asked

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to be clothed next, and stooped to allow Margueritte to reach the strings of his mackintosh. "Les Anglais" were most of them too tall for Margueritte, but she whisked them round and dressed them like so many overgrown babies. Donald made straight for the spray next to May's, and she shut hers off to turn and welcome him.

"What brings you here?" he asked.

She looked at him, reflectively.

"Has your uncle sent you?"

"No, not exactly, but—I—I couldn't bear that Second Death."

"Whose death?" questioned Donald, uneasily. He shrank with a shudder from the very word.

"Uncle Edward meant me," she answered, mournfully, "because I am not converted. He says I shall go to Hell, and burn forever and ever."

Donald looked wrathfully at the innocent, child-like face. How dare anyone frighten that sunny little being with threats of Hell?

"Do you think it is true?" asked May. "Would God do it to me?"

"Do you think your father would?" he asked, astonishing himself by his own argument. (Was he turning Theologian?)

"Of course not," answered May. "Don't be silly."

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“Haven’t they ever told you that God is your Father?”

“Continuer les pulverisations, Monsieur et Mademoiselle,” called Margueritte, pouncing upon them. May deftly turned on her spray in the woman’s direction, and then apologised for having wet her, and Margueritte withdrew, scowling.

“Nasty old bully,” grumbled May; “she won’t let us off a moment. I’ll give her a sousing next time she comes interfering with me. Mr. McGregor, you do look funny with that tool in your mouth to keep it open, but oh!—just see Mr. Derwent. Do you think anyone would ever come to the pulverisations if they knew what they look like?”

Mr. Derwent’s face in profile at that moment was, indeed, sufficiently peculiar to excuse a smile, and Donald wondered how it was that he had never before been tickled by the spectacle of all these people at their pulverisations, domineered over by the Swiss peasant woman, who was at that moment shaking a stout gentleman of title because he persisted in using the spray for his tongue instead of for his throat.

“Margueritte is no respector of persons,” he said, and suddenly became absorbed in his spray, for she was looking his way.

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“Where is Gustave?” asked May. She was attending more to her fellow-sufferers than to the natural business of the hour.

Donald had to turn off his spray again. He had never before given Margueritte so much trouble.

“Gustave is a strict Roman Catholic,” said he, “and if his very life depended on it, he dare not go to Confession after a Sunday pulverisation.”

Before the spray was playing on his throat again, Margueritte was at him. She spoke rapidly in French, haranguing Donald with menaces.

“What did she say?” asked May, again interfering with Donald’s good intentions.

“She said that if she caught me talking again, she’d not only lay a stick across my back, but tell Dr. Deladoey, into the bargain.”

“Mr. McGregor, I never would have believed that you would go and deceive me.” May’s tones were hurt.

“Well, I’ll tell you the honest truth,” said Donald, with an absurd pang of regret. “I didn’t half understand what she was saying, but she did really threaten me with Dr. Deladoey’s name I am sorry if you think I meant to deceive you—I only spoke in fun I will never vex you like that again.”

“No, don’t,” pleaded May, “because when you

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do, I don't like you any better than I like Mr. Derwent and Gustave. But you are nice, Mr. McGregor, and I hope you aren't really going to die; what's more, I don't believe you are. Take care, she's looking our way again!"

The pulverisation hour, generally so tedious, was all too short for Donald that morning.

CHAPTER IV—*Sleep Is Good*

WO hours had passed since Dr. Dela-doe's early morning visit, and Mrs. Courtenay kept watch beside her husband. Her mind was going back to those days—not so very long ago, and yet separated from her as if eternity swept between—when Reginald had first come into her life. She remembered him as her lover. Those days of courtship had been brief, and the impassioned lover had disappeared as soon as he became husband. The history of her married days had been one of steady disillusionment, but love is strong, and dies hard, and Mrs. Courtenay thought only of the days of courtship. Gazing at the poor, thin face, she was ready to forget everything except that he was suffering, to excuse all upon that score.

He stirred, moaning, and she was beside him instantly.

“Good Lord, another!” he muttered, and a terrible fit of coughing, followed by the most severe haemorrhage yet, shook his frame till it seemed as if his bones rattled together.

“My darling!” cried his wife, wringing her hands.

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“Don’t be a fool!” he gasped. He sat up, wiping his lips. “I’m going out, I can’t endure the house stifling. . . . My hat.”

She got his things, and he let her wrap a shawl round him. Then he motioned her away and staggered to the door alone. He began walking down the passage. Half way towards the stairs he reeled, and would have fallen had he not caught hold of a table placed in the passage for the use of the femme-de-chambre. He tumbled into the chair beside it.

“Reggie!” cried his wife, her voice sharp with alarm.

“My sleep—giddy,” he said; “a little giddy, that’s all. I’ll take your arm.”

She shrank as he leaned on her; he had never done it before.

“I got up too suddenly,” he said. “It made me giddy. Ah, the stairs!”

He did not speak again till they had reached the bottom of the stairs. He hardly knew what was happening, only he was conscious of a long descent, and of a brightness below, which turned into an open door and sunlight.

Then he said: “We’ll go out and sit in the sunlight.”

He heard a gentle crunching under his feet—it was gravel. There was still something solid be-

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neath him. Presently he said, "We'll now sit down," and he knew it was his own voice speaking, though it seemed to come from a distance. Yes, this was a seat, and the hazy figure beside him was his wife. He was cold, but the sunshine poured like a benediction over him.

"Reggie," said a voice, after a pause that might have been a minute or a century, "when—if—you get better, is there any hope that we may be as happy as we were before we married? Sometimes my heart is hungry for a kind word from you."

He roused himself to say once more, "Don't be a fool!"

The warm sunshine embraced them both, but the two poor mortals were cold, both of them.

"Only one kind word," she pleaded.

It was never uttered, so the whole of the woman's future life was altered. He had just strength enough to sneer at her.

Thump, thump, thump . . . perhaps it was the beating of his heart? That dim, yellow spot might be the sun, the dark fog closing round him might be the sky. He heard a faint, soft chime, and knew that it was eleven o'clock, and that he still heard an hour striking on the earth. The sound seemed endless, but when it ceased, sound had ceased for him. And now the sun went out.

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He saw it disappear as if a hand had suddenly turned off the light in Heaven.

“Reggie, what’s the matter?”

“A little pain, nothing—send for Deladoey *another injection* quick!”

Those words passed through his mind, and he seemed to know that his wife had started up and was running wildly towards the bureau. Her frenzy was a matter of amusement to him, and he actually laughed—he knew he did—when he pictured her standing at the telephone, and screaming for the doctor. He knew also that he was in mortal agony, but it made him laugh again. His fingers had clutched at his collar, his eyes had fixed.

“Reggie, Reggie!”

He looked up, seeing nothing. The perspiration stood out upon his forehead. His blue lips began to grin.

“Oh, my dear, what is it?”

It suddenly occurred to him that those words had been spoken, and that he had answered, “Nothing going to sleep.”

His head dropped back, his eyes mercifully closed. One short sigh passed quivering through his lips.

“Sleep is good,” had been said. It was the last idea in his brain.

“He has gone to sleep again,” whispered his

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wife, with the relief that is known only by those who witness the cessation of agony. She opened her parasol to shield him from the glare that beat down upon his upturned face, and she sat still, waiting.

There was nowhere the slightest break or shadow in the sky, hiding in its solemn depths the secrets of all eternity. There was not a sound in the air. Even the birds had hushed their singing.

She sat still, holding the parasol over her husband. The sun should not smite him in his sleep, that good sleep into which he had fallen. She waited, just as nature itself seemed to be waiting. She was no longer terrified; the calm upon her was almost supernatural, like the wonderful hush which held the air. Something that had held her spirit captive had suddenly snapped and set her free. She would nurse her husband as before, would humour him and tend to him, but she would never again fret for a kind word from him. How quietly he slept!—it was the Day of Rest, and he rested well. She was becoming drowsy herself.

A quick step disturbed the gravel. She started, and held up her hand to command silence. The step stopped in front of her. She raised a face, luminous with its sudden liberty, to the doctor.

“My husband sleeps!” she whispered. “He had some pain, but it is over Sh!”

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The doctor was staring at his patient ; he hardly heard the little murmur of words.

“Don’t wake him,” she whispered.

“Madame, I cannot,” he returned, starting violently.

“Hush, hush!” she answered, with gentle reproof. “You must forgive me for having brought you here—the paroxysm is over. My husband does not want you now.”

Her soft words came like the blows of a hammer to the doctor. Under them he winced.

“Madame, your husband is dead!”

As he said the words, distinctly, and with emphasis, he turned and gave her a look.

“Dead,” he repeated. “We cannot wake him.”

Their eyes met ; hers, wide, astonished, dilated. He had no power to move, he stood petrified, staring into the depths of her beautiful, astonished eyes.

A child ran out of the Hotel, shouting. It was little Louis Roulet. She woke, as from a trance, and hushed the child. Seeing the doctor, Louis darted back into the Hotel, and hid.

“What? What did you say? He is only asleep.” This time she did not whisper ; she spoke aloud, angrily. She had risen to her feet, and was staring about her. Then she looked back at her husband, and called his name, sharply : “Reggie!”

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“Mon Dieu!”

Dr. Deladoey had covered his face with his hand; he shuddered like a man in agony. Something had come into his eyes—could they be tears?

“REGGIE, wake up at once! Do you hear?”

The doctor stepped forward and seized her two cold hands in his.

“Madame, you are ill. It is necessary to come away.”

“Am I ill?” she asked, laughing stupidly. “It is true that I have not been very well of late, but I have not had time to consider myself.” Then she turned back towards her husband. “Is he dead?” she whispered. “Did you say he was dead?”

The doctor suddenly bared his head—and then she knew.

“Take me away, Monsieur; for God’s sake, take me away—I—I cannot stay in the Hotel. I must go somewhere, but I—I don’t know where. I haven’t anywhere to go,” she said, and wailed.

Half an hour later the Hotel omnibus was out, driving towards a châlet in the mountains.

“Drive quickly,” was the doctor’s command. “I have an appointment at three o’clock, and I must be back—I have no time—quickly!”

It was uphill all the way, but the man drove quickly.

CHAPTER V — *Monsieur Duval of Lausanne*

PUNCTUALLY at three o'clock Donald presented himself at Dr. Deladoey's house in Donvery. It was a curious building, approached through an archway in the street, where he found himself in a cobble-stoned court, and had some difficulty in deciding which door to try. He looked up and round, and knew that he would have to come here on Saturday for his operation, and shuddered. Already the door seemed to be shutting upon him, that door which would close upon his life. He hazarded a guess which it was, and presently found himself walking down a long stone passage after a Swiss femme-de-chambre. Through this same passage he would walk on the last day of this same week. The way seemed to lead to a sepulchre.

Now he was in a cheerless waiting-room, and had nothing to amuse him except the thought of Mr. Courtenay's death. That thought had fastened upon his mind like a cancer, he could not rid himself of it. Unfortunately, Donald had come

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out that morning just as the little procession bearing the poor shell of a human being had come in through the Hotel door. Such scenes were not desirable for him now. He imaged himself looking like that.

The sound of voices reached his ear. One was loud, the voice of a man who could not control the mighty organ within him; the other he recognised at once. No one else spoke in that tone. The Specialist possessed notes, even in speaking, which would have been worth a fortune to another man.

“You shall see him now,” he heard Dr. Deladoey say.

They came in together, and Monsieur Duval of Lausanne was introduced to Donald. He was a huge and shaggy specimen of humanity, beside whom Donald, tall as he was, felt diminished. With little ceremony he whipped out a stethoscope and proceeded to sound Donald’s lungs. He also made a careful examination of his throat, as far as was possible in ordinary light.

“If you would care to come into my Salle de Consultation, you shall have the satisfaction of beholding this case to more advantage,” suggested Dr. Deladoey.

“There is no necessity,” returned the physician from Lausanne, thrusting his stethoscope back

Monsieur Duval of Lausanne

into his breast pocket. "Young man, if you had come to me six months ago, we would have attempted physic. Surgery is not that which I approve. You will remain here until my friend Monsieur Deladoey and I have consulted together, and then we shall present to you our report."

Donald bowed and took a seat. He was glad to be relieved of the huge voice, it worried his head, and he regarded this proceeding as a farce. The two doctors retired into an adjoining room, and Donald heard the rumble of Monsieur Duval's voice, gradually gathering volume, until at last he heard words.

"No man could perform such an operation. Monsieur, it is murder!"

Donald started, and now his sense of hearing, always very acute, was concentrated upon the conversation that was not intended for him to hear, but that yet he felt he must. Cold beads of perspiration broke out upon his brow. Murder is an ugly word.

"In any case the cause of science might as well die one way as another."

Dr. Deladoey's answer came in fragmentary pieces through the obstructing wall. It was not necessary to hear every word. He understood well enough what the argument was. It was sickening to sit there and know that they were dis-

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cussing whether to "murder" him or not. They both knew—it would be no mistake on their part. But then, science demands its victims! It was Dr. Deladoey who could thus argue; that thought hit him. Absurd! Who was this Dr. Deladoey, that he should be affected by his scientific callousness?

The strife behind the wall waxed hotter, but Donald no longer listened. He felt intensely tired, and longed to get out into the open air. After all, it did not matter much whether they agreed upon the point or not. In the end it would be all the same.

There were steps overhead, and Donald knew that a heavy object was being carried through the room above. On that floor was the doctor's hospital pension, where all his serious operations were performed. Perhaps some poor unfortunate was being carried to his doom, or perhaps it was a coffin they were bearing on their shoulders. The place was grim with suggestions—and in a little Swiss town like Donverv, surgical murders, in the cause of science, would be easy enough.

The voices in the next room had subsided. Dr. Deladoey's had most of the argument now. It was impossible to distinguish any of the words. Now and then silence fell, and at last the communicating door was opened, and the two doc-

Monsieur Duval of Lausanne

tors, both with grave faces, came back to their patient.

"It is for you to decide," burst out Dr. Duval, "but I will tell you, Monsieur, that apart from any operation you have no chance, no opportunity of recovery from your fatal malady."

The Specialist stood aside, and Donald discovered that in his set face might be traced signs of emotion. Thrilling through him went a sense of fierce exultation. If Dr. Deladoey cared, if it hurt him to commit this murder, Donald was ready to permit him to do it.

"Monsieur McGregor is aware of his danger in risking this new operation," said Dr. Deladoey. "I have informed him."

"And I," added Donald, overcome by some strong feeling he did not try to understand or control, "have already placed myself in Moosyou Deladoey's hands, and signified my determination to go through the operation, whether it prove fatal or not. I have expressed to him, Moosyou, that I am able to face danger without shrinking back the moment it is discerned, and am not such a monster as to refuse to science the martyr it demands, since in any case my life's term has been settled."

Monsieur Duval stood staring, with his mouth open. The man looked so amazed, and so un-

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affectedly struck with admiration, that Donald could not help laughing.

"I suppose that is all," said he, "and I may go?"

"You will go straight back to the Hotel," said Dr. Deladoey, rousing himself. "You will not delay." He glanced out of the window. Once again he repeated his command, and then Donald took leave of them, having been informed that he would come here on Saturday morning, and that Dr. Duval would be present.

It was glorious to get out again into the sunshine, to escape from that terror-haunted room, and the unpleasant experience there. Dr. Deladoey had ordered him to go straight back to the Hotel at once, but with the taste of freedom out here in the open air came to Donald a wilful delight in disobeying, and instead of going home at once he turned off to explore a mountain path in the opposite direction.

Donald went slowly up the hill. He wanted to get away from humanity, to face the mystery of his coming dissolution alone. The certainty of death within a few days was a thought that required steady attention, free from the interruptions of hotel life.

Wonderful insects were on the wing that day. Dragon-flies five inches long, green and scarlet creatures that darted before him in the sunlight,

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butterflies of cerulean blue, and tiny-winged things of transparent tints. He mounted slowly, trying to lose no moment.

Whatever Nature might have to teach him, must be compressed into a few paltry hours.

He came to a seat and rested. He saw the blue waters of Lake Neuchâtel far away, and caught glimpses of the Bernese Alps beyond. The air he breathed was as pure as the eternal snow upon the Jungfrau. It came round him warm and still, weighing down his eyelids.

Donald began to fall asleep. He was not equal to the strong emotions he had suffered this day; his poor, weak body could not resist Nature's suggestion of rest. A soft and languorous scent of pungent herbs surrounded him, and the great panorama of valley, lake and mountain melted away in haze as his eyelids closed.

Suddenly he was startled by something sharp and stinging on his face. At first he thought he had been struck by a bullet, and that this which was trickling down his cheek was blood. He sat up straight, rudely awakened. Then he remembered the doctor's threatened storm, and looked at the sky in alarm. It had dulled down to a leaden pallor, though still the sun shone brightly. Another hailstone hit him—on the hand, this time. Glancing away in the direction of the Jura Moun-

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tains, Donald saw what was about to happen, and rose from his seat in a panic. Alas! what had he done? How had he dared to offer opposition to that man who knew everything? In the face of his warnings and his command, he had taken the risk of disobedience. There was no shelter near; he was exposed to the full fury of that storm, which was advancing with hideous velocity.

It was the sort of storm that gathers only in mountain districts. Before it broke, it could be seen coming in a luminous, purple cloud, enveloping one peak after another in pitchy darkness. Faint rumblings could be heard, while sunshine still flooded the valley. He felt the ground tremble. To watch that storm was terrifying. It filled one with superstitious terrors; it was as the Day of Doom advancing upon unprotected mortals, and, like an idiot, Donald stood rooted to the ground, watching it come towards him, paralysed with a new, unearthly fear.

Then it broke, in deluges of rain, as if a water-spout had burst in the sky, and he was soaked to the skin in a moment. He cowered down against a rock, hiding his face from the blaze of lightning, stopping his ears to muffle that thunder which shook the world. Without intermission the awful, furious blast continued until, quite suddenly, the

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sun burst forth again, and the storm travelled onwards.

Trembling at every step, his clothes clinging round his benumbed limbs, Donald crept home, beaten. He was barely able to cover the distance, and when he arrived at the Hotel had to ask the porter to lend him an arm upstairs.

No one was there to minister to him. Unassisted, he had to take what precautions he could against the chill he felt in his blood. Accusing himself of unpardonable folly, he tried to recover warmth, to get back again the strength he knew he had lost. A man in his coffin might as reasonably expect to get up and walk!

CHAPTER VI—*Diet, Physical and Mental*

MR. EDWARD DOPPING had invited Mr. Derwent to tea in his private sitting-room, and he had not been opposed by his sister, though she was a strict Sabatarian. True, her conscience had a struggle when she heard that Mr. Crabbe, the newcomer, was also invited. That seemed to savour of a tea-party, and she restrained her brother's enthusiasm by declining to entertain any more guests, no matter how good might be this opportunity. "But you can never tell," Mr. Dopping had argued, "where the good seed will take root. I should have liked to gather together now a little assembly in our room—a word spoken in season may be the saving of a soul—and there are many souls unsaved, even in this Hotel. The sudden and unexpected death of one of them might be used as a warning to the rest. It is not often that such an opportunity occurs of pressing home the lesson."

"Then I'll ask Gustave," put in May. "He isn't saved, of course, because he's a Catholic."

"A Roman Catholic," sternly corrected her

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uncle, and forbade her to have anything more to do with Gustave, exclaiming in horror at the bare idea that his niece should ever have spoken to one of those dangerous heretics. So only Mr. Derwent and Mr. Crabbe were admitted to the party, and May became sulky.

"I hear that you went to the Eglise Libre this morning," began Mr. Derwent, as he took his cup over to an easy chair.

"Yes, we did." May pouted as she handed the cream and sugar to him.

"And what good did you get there?"

"A good nap," smartly retorted May, then glanced out of the corner of her eye to see if her uncle had heard.

"Those pulverisations ought not to be allowed upon the Sabbath day," he was saying. "I had no idea before—though I have been to Donverry ten years running—that such an abuse was allowed. Were you aware of it, Derwent?"

"I was," returned his guest. "It is unfortunate that people do not leave off their diseases once a week, to render these things superfluous."

Mr. Dopping was cutting the cake. He paused a moment to look at Mr. Derwent, who had hastily set down his own cup and gone over to the table where Miss Dopping was pouring out the tea. He stood over her, waiting upon her, and

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it was a pretty sight for a brother to witness, especially when there was nothing he could have wished better for his sister—or himself—than that she should secure the affections of this slippery individual.

May held out the jug of cream towards Mr. Crabbe.

“I wonder if I ought to take cream,” said that invalid, appealing to the room at large.

“Why not?”

“Because it disagrees with me.”

“If you find it disagreeing with you, do not take it,” suggested Mr. Derwent. “That is simple.”

“Simplicity itself,” chimed in the sweet voice of Miss Dopping. She glanced upwards at the face bending over her, with a smile and a blush worthy of youth itself.

“In this place the importance of diet is completely ignored,” complained Mr. Crabbe, “and I do not believe in your Dr. Deladoey. He’s a perfect humbug; he knows nothing whatever about his business. He recommended me, in my state of health, to eat whatever I fancied! And he advised me to go out walking, or circulating, as he calls it, and to be in the fresh air, with my cough! He never noticed my cough, either, until I drew his attention to it, and then he said, ‘Ah, it is a habit of some people to cough, and some people culti-

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vate their habits.' Insulting—that's what I call it."

"Did he sound you?" asked Mr. Derwent, gravely.

"Not until I insisted on it myself, and when I asked him if I had better go to bed, he said there was no reason against it, if I felt so disposed, and if it would cause me any satisfaction. Imagine a doctor in England daring to talk like that!"

"Mr. Crabbe," broke in May, with a defiant glance out of her naughty blue eye at her arch-foe, "your shawl has slipped off your knee. Won't you take cold?"

"Miss Tempest is of an eminently thoughtful disposition," added Mr. Derwent, in response to her challenge. "It is quite marvellous in one so young."

The invalid turned slowly in his chair and let his eyes rest upon the girl's face. He smiled tenderly at her, but she was already off at the other end of the room, separating herself from her uncle as far as possible.

"It would be a great advantage to a delicate man like you to have a strong young girl to look after him," said that insinuating voice in the ear of Mr. Crabbe. "Little Miss May would be an ideal nurse, being of such a cheerful disposition."

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“That is the very thing for an invalid,” returned Mr. Crabbe, also *sotto voce*, and with enthusiasm.

“The very thing,” repeated Mr. Derwent; then, raising his voice, he begged May to come back and enlighten them on a matter of importance.

“What is it about?” asked May.

“May, did you not hear Mr. Derwent’s request?”

Up went the girl’s head, but she came back in response to her uncle’s rebuke. Something in the young face seemed to prophesy a moment when her submission would come to an end. But Mr. Dopping had no conception of such a possibility. So far he had overruled all the natural opposition of her nature, and had enforced obedience from her when all others had failed.

“We have never attended a Swiss Service, and we want to know something about the fetish. Is it very awful?”

“You generally come out alive,” said May.

“Do they preach?”

“I should just about think they do.”

“Ah, how long?”

“Long enough to—turn *you* bald,” replied the girl, impudently, but lowering her voice to hide the last three words from all others except her enemy.

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“We had an excellent sermon.”

“How do you know, Uncle Edward? You did not understand it. I heard you telling Aunt Alice so, and you know when you do tell her anything everybody else can hear as well.”

“The minister spoke so fast that I could not follow, perfectly,” returned Mr. Dopping, wrath smouldering in his voice.

Mr. Derwent saw that he had made a mistake, and turned from one solemn subject to another with an ease that did him credit. He now asked his friend how the tracts were getting on.

This was always a soothing question, and Mr. Dopping became more cordial. “I have had a new series published this year. Look, here is the packet. I have chosen startling titles, to arrest attention. This one I called ‘The Way to Hell,’ and this one, ‘The Second Death.’ ”

“Most inspiring,” commented Mr. Derwent.

“That last one made an impression upon May,” said Mr. Dopping. “She even wished to write herself, after I had read it out to her. I shouldn’t be at all surprised if she became a bit of an author, too; it is in the blood.”

“Oh, and what line will she take?” asked her tormentor, with gravity. “I am anxious to hear, for I believe in diet for the mind as firmly as some of us”—he bowed towards Mr. Crabbe—“believe

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in diet for the body. Feed your mind upon good and wholesome literature, and it will grow up vigorous, but if it sickens, you must resort to mental medicine." His eye fell upon the packet of tracts. "The author's post is one of grave responsibility, Miss May," said he, turning now to address her alone. "It resembles the position of a cook, none more honourable in this world, for upon our chef depends all the happiness of our life. Edify us, Miss May, by now informing us what line you intend to take in literature?"

"May," sharply uttered her uncle, for the girl had turned away sulkily. She started, and once again that dangerous sparkle in her eyes was lighted.

"Is it History, Biography, or Travel?" continued Mr. Derwent, as if no interruption had occurred; "or do you even aspire to—Tracts?"

"I mean," said May, bravely facing them all, but looking straight at her uncle, "to write *bad novels*."

The tea-party had been by no means a success, and after it was over, Mr. Edward Dopping walked up and down his room, absorbed in wrathful thoughts. May had shown herself defiant and impudent, Mr. Derwent had seemed more than once to be making insidious fun when the conversation had grown most serious—and, after all, he

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had completely forgotten to mention Mr. Courtenay's death, and so had lost one of the best opportunities he had ever been granted of terrifying the careless and unconverted. For the rest of the evening he made himself as disagreeable as he possibly could, which was his usual manner of displaying holy indignation.



PART III
THE CROSSWAYS



CHAPTER I—*An Appropriate Day*

AFTER a night of fever and unrest Donald crawled out into the sunshine. He had passed the Doppings, with May between them, on their way to the Salle d'Attente, but had barely responded to their greeting. Even the funny appeal for sympathy in May's face had brought no answering smile. He was weary and heavy laden, his limbs draggled, his head swam, and it was all he could do to crawl along the ground. The fact that he was alone and uncared for added the last touch to his physical misery. He crept away into the first secluded spot he could find, and sank down upon a seat there, as lonely and homesick as he could well be.

The absence of human help, the fact that not one solitary being out of the millions of the world was here to pity him filled his mind with bitterness, but when he heard a step approaching he was angry because his solitude was disturbed, and pulled his hat over his eyes so that he might not have to recognise the intruder.

It was a lagging step and he could hear trail-

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ing skirts. He was obliged to look up, and his eyes met Helen Lester's. They looked at each other, both surprised in a moment of despondency, and unprepared for this encounter. Then over her face, which he had never before seen pale, came a rush of colour, and into her dull eyes sprang a light that enveloped him in warmth and comfort.

"It would be too much to ask you to sit down here and talk to me," said Donald. He forgot his manners—he did not salute her.

"Too much?" said Helen. "Don't you know that I am generally free in the mornings, until my father comes out after the Treatment?"

"Then stay, and fulfill your mission."

"And what is that?"

"It is to raise the spirits of those who are down—a heaven-sent mission, Miss Lester, and one for which you are well qualified."

Her head sank. So deep a pain was at her heart that she felt it impossible to fulfill any such mission now. Then the strong spirit of womanhood revived and triumphed over its personal suffering.

"Most certainly I will stay with you," she said, and sat down beside him. "What has upset you?"

"Two things—Courtenay's death and the storm yesterday. I was out in it, Miss Lester, and came

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home a poor, half-drowned fool, who deserved what he got, for Dr. Deladoey warned me twice, and I had assumed the arrogance of any man who could imagine that he knew better than that man. I've absolutely done for myself this time."

"No; you are going to recover." Her voice entirely concealed the scare she really felt—it almost conveyed certainty.

"Why should I? Courtenay did not recover, yet there would have been some meaning in it if Fate had spared the man whose life was of some importance—mine is of none."

"You forget—your parents," said Helen, wincing. And then she added: "You have friends, also; some of them will be sorry when—if—you do not recover."

"It's easy enough to get over the loss of a friend," said Donald, gloomily. "The gap is filled almost before he's buried."

"You are wrong, Mr. McGregor; in this world a friend is too rare a thing to be regarded so lightly. Such a loss can never be replaced. However, you are not going to put your friends to this test."

Donald straightened himself.

"If you say I will recover, I suppose I must."

He laughed, and Helen made a pretence at joining him. Already he looked brighter and better.

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They were sitting together. The sun shone for them, the birds sang, and above them all the thrilling voice of a chaffinch broke out suddenly.

“That is the one sound in nature which is in the major key,” said Helen, “and so it is the most joyful sound in all the world.”

“Perhaps,” added Donald, “that is why in supreme moments of my life I always hear a chaffinch.”

Helen looked at him and did not answer, but the voice of the chaffinch entered into her soul and became a part of herself. She could not but think that he regarded this as one of *the supreme moments of his life*.

“I am not sure,” said Donald, “that the birds have any right to sing in a place like Donverry.”

“Yet they sing here almost more than in other places,” she said, “and it seems to me as if that is significant.”

“Yes, we very seldom know when we ought to rejoice, or when mourn. It’s a kind of solemn joke to be alive.”

“Let us, then, accept the joke,” said Helen, “and make another.”

“How?”

“By remaining alive.”

Once again he laughed, and Helen joined him. This time there was a touch of mirth in it, all the

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keener for its contrast with the sharp pain below their words.

Mr. Edward Dopping, having come out after getting his party safely through the Treatment, heard the sound of their laughter, and stopped. A cloud of displeasure darkened his brow. He wheeled round in the direction of that sound of folly, and soon found Donald and Helen sitting together in a spot where they no doubt had imagined themselves secure from interruption, to indulge in whatever nonsense they liked.

“Life seems very bright and promising to you two young people just now,” said he, in threatening tones.

“Does it?” asked Helen, and shuddered.

“And,” he continued, waving aside her reply, “you both fancy that it will go on like this always. You are as sure of your life as you are that the sun will rise to-morrow.”

“Oh?” questioned Donald. “I had an idea that my life would come to an abrupt conclusion on Saturday morning next.”

“Oh no, not Saturday,” Helen cried out, sharply; “any day but Saturday.”

“Young man and young woman,” stormed Mr. Dopping, “this is no subject on which to joke.”

“It isn’t much of a joke,” returned Donald. “Is it, Miss Lester?”

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Mr. Dopping, not having yet recovered from his chagrin of yesterday evening, was ready to take offence on the spot.

"It is evident that you refuse to listen to the solemn warning it might have been my privilege to deliver," he said. "May the day never come when you would give all that you possess to have back this Opportunity."

The tone of his voice so palpably contradicted this last charitable sentiment that Donald could not resist the temptation of glancing at Helen out of the corner of his eye, and a violent impulse to laugh overcame her. Donald did not attempt to conceal his broad smile.

"I will leave something with you, which may rouse in you a better mind," said Mr. Dopping, depositing on the seat beside them a leaflet bearing his name, which part of the title was, in his eyes, the certificate of its excellence. Mr. Dopping was very careful what tracts he distributed—never any but his own. By this simple means he always distributed the best.

They waited until he had gone, and then Donald turned to Helen.

"See what your religion produces," said he.

Helen looked after the retreating figure.

"Is it possible that you, with your mind, could be deceived by such chicanery?"

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“No,” she answered, and trembled, for his deep respect filled her with fear, though it came as food to her hungry love. “You cannot think that I am taken in by those worn-out phrases.”

“Nevertheless, they lie at the root of your faith,” he persisted, and picked up the tract. “This gives chapter and verse for each malicious threat that it contains Why should I not go to my operation on Saturday?”

Helen was disconcerted. The sudden change of subject found her unprepared.

“Come, tell me,” said Donald, and now his hand touched hers—he was very close to her, his eyes were demanding her to unlock her secret. Almost she told him, but the spirit of the woman was strong, and triumphed once again, so she was silent. “I have settled with the doctors for that day, but for *you* I am willing to rearrange.”

“No, no,” said Helen, “you must not consider me.”

“I do,” said Donald.

She gazed back into his insistent eyes.

“Tell me why it should not be Saturday—that is the last day they give me. If any other day is chosen, it must be sooner.”

“Oh, no, Mr. McGregor, not sooner!”

“Is there anything of consequence happening to you upon that day?”

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“Yes,” she assented, trembling, “it is the day that I dread most in all my life. But you must not ask me more; now I come to think of it, it will be the most appropriate day I could imagine for any great event or great anxiety.”

“And I may not share this anxiety with you?”

She shook her head. “It is your chief duty to keep your mind unagitated, and the whole of your attention concentrated upon the health of your body.”

“A man is unsuited to that task,” said he.

“Then he must accept the services of women,” returned Helen; “for these few days will you try to submit to—my—rule?” Her face burned, as if with shame, but his was suddenly lighted with a look she had never seen before.

“If I may,” said Donald, “it will be my one chance of recovering the ground I lost by my fool’s escapade of yesterday. Only, if you undertake my case, I shall expect you to take care of me.”

It was a compact, and from the moment that it was made he revived. Throughout the day he kept in Helen’s sight, and in spite of her father’s continual requirements she found many opportunities of proving that she had been in earnest in her undertaking. Up to the last minute of that day she surrounded Donald with the comfort of a

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woman's steadfast thought. It was what he needed now more than anything else.

Next morning, with a book in her hands, she sought her charge, and found him hovering about the empty Salon, uncertain where to go because he did not know where to look for her, and he felt an insistent need of her. At her approach he came forward, eagerly.

"Shall we go out?"

"No, sit down here," she answered. "You are on no account to face the treacherous wind that is blowing. I have been out to test it for you."

He obeyed her, looking satisfied. "Of course, you will stay to amuse me indoors, if you will not allow me to go out."

"That is a matter of course," she answered, smiling.

"What book is that?"

She showed him, and Donald was astonished, for it was the book that he had written.

"You have brought it to tell me what impression it made on you?"

"It grieved me," she answered.

"I hope you will tell me why."

Helen was evidently nervous; her breath came rapidly, catching in her throat. Then she fixed her earnest, brimming eyes upon him and answered:

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“It is not a good book, Mr. McGregor, and it is not sincere. But it is a work of genius, and will not fail to influence many lives, perhaps even your own. I have brought it here to tell you—a daring thing to do, since I am by no means equal to the task of criticising such a work, but I cannot bear to think that you are allowing yourself to be blinded by these arguments. You have been trying to take from humanity its only prop.”

“It is time for humanity to learn to stand alone,” said he, and his voice was stern.

“It cannot.”

“It must.”

“It cannot,” she repeated. “Life would be too terrible—and *death* Oh, believe me, Mr. McGregor, whatever deprives us of hope, and so breaks the spring of life, is wrong.”

“I have not intended that,” he said; “I have only tried to destroy the old illusion—God.”

“But we need God,” she pleaded. “We hunger and we thirst for Him. He is an immortal passion of the soul. And surely the existence of this immortal craving is a proof that somewhere there is a satisfaction for it? Is there not some principle in Nature which teaches us that lesson?”

“Nature chiefly teaches us that there is no satisfaction in anything,” bitterly contradicted Donald.

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“Because one of the most important lessons of this life is that we do not belong to material conditions, and so they cannot hold us long.”

Donald was silent, and for some time they sat without a word. Then Helen exclaimed, with something like a sob, “It is absolutely impossible.”

“What is?”

“That we should come into existence for the first and only time when we are born down here, that we should be capable of eternal thoughts and aspirations, that we should be able to love as—some of us love—and then—nothing more!”

When her voice ceased, the awful folly of such a thought for a moment occurred to Donald. It was accentuated by the ticking of a clock.

“If there is a God, He is evil,” he suddenly broke out, “or He would not allow misery and pain that He could command to cease.”

“If evil did not exist, man would not be free to act, to choose between good and evil. Evil is not God’s creation, but man’s own free will acting contrary to his own interests. Misery and pain are due to this mistake that we have made in ignorance,” said Helen. “We have blindly fixed our happiness upon material conditions, instead of using them to gain experience and knowledge, and when humanity glimpsed some of the truth be-

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yond, we invented a number of little stifling doctrines and dogmas to obscure the light that was about to break. It is easy enough to see the absurdity of that," she said, smiling deprecatingly. "It does not require a very high intelligence to do so, but how can a high intelligence be stunned into disbelief in God because men in a lower stage of evolution confine Him to such paltry limits?"

She stopped; her heart was beating fast and painfully. She felt herself incapable of wrestling with this man's keener intellect, and longed inexpressibly to impart to him her own security of belief. Perhaps he was dying—his poor, thin body looked unable to persist against the ravages of its disease, but he seemed to her more utterly alive than any other man she knew, less able to cease his vital being. How was she to impart to him this intense comfort?

Then occurred one of those interruptions that break the threads of life.

Miss Dopping came in, and looked round with a worried face. "Excuse me," she said, "but have you seen my niece anywhere? I cannot find her, and my brother is waiting to take her to the doctor."

"What! Playing truant again?" asked Donald, and laughed sharply.

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Shaking her head helplessly, the poor little lady hurried away. She had, all unknowingly, interfered with the crisis of those two lives. Donald had been about to speak to Helen, to say words that might have saved himself and her the torture of a hideous mistake, but those words had been arrested in the impulse of speaking them, and now he had his impulses under control again.

CHAPTER II—*Bad Novels*

DONALD'S hours were slipping away. He watched them one by one persisting on their steady course. There were still a few distinct interruptions between him and the Crossways of his life, but these were lessening. Helen Lester could not come and talk to him on more than a very few further occasions now; Dr. Deladoey had hardly a minute to spare him. Still, he was to have one more interview with the Specialist, when he hoped that they would not meet only as doctor and patient, but as human beings who care for each other. This was almost his chief desire, it was something to regard with hope even in the waning hours of a life. Between him and those nearing Crossways also lay this evening's meeting with his old parents, which he dreaded.

He had the whole afternoon before their arrival, and he sat down in the Salon, because here there was a clock. He liked to keep near a clock in these days. He sat and stared at it, watching the pendulum tick off another and another of his moments. Helen was out with her father; he felt the blank of

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her absence and resented it. With each passing hour he had become more dependent upon her.

The door burst open, and he looked round in some annoyance, vexed that anyone should be so noisy. Helen was never noisy, her presence brought calm to him. Then his annoyance met with sudden death, for it was May, and she came dancing towards him in the glamour of her childhood, which seemed to cling about her, reluctant to depart.

“What do you think I have been doing, Mr. McGregor?”

“I give it up; ask another,” he returned, brightening at once.

“I have begun writing a bad novel, and I’ve been reading the first chapter to Aunt Alice, and she’s crying.”

“Why? Was it so pathetic?”

“No, it was so wicked,” answered May, with relish. “She asked me first whether I was writing for the good of the world, so I said she’d better sit down and I’d read it for her good. But when I got to the part where the devil wags his tail, she screamed, and she wouldn’t hear another word. She had no idea that I could be so wicked. But, Mr. McGregor, I want to make the second chapter still worse. I’d like it to be full of the

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most dreadful swearing, but I hardly know any bad words. Can you tell me some?"

"'Confound it,'" answered Donald. "Will that do?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, eagerly, "that's just the sort of thing I wanted. I'll write it down before I forget Now, can you think of any more? I want mine to be the worst novel ever published."

"That is rather serious, isn't it?"

"Yes," said May, "but then, you see, my uncle writes tracts, so it was quite necessary that some one in the family should keep the balance."

"So you balance good tracts with bad novels? That appears a sensible arrangement. All the harm done by the bad novels may then be counteracted by the good tracts, and all the good done by them may be nullified by the bad novels. It is a capital plan; there is a suggestion of rest in the idea, for at that rate we may as well do nothing at all."

"You write books, too," said May, "and I want to know all about them. Do you publish them at your own expense?"

"No," said Donald, laughing.

"But do you mean that *you get money for them?*"

"Yes, that's what it comes to."

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“Uncle Edward pays to have his published,” confided May; “he pays a lot of money. My father says it is a shame, throwing away money out of the family on a lot of tracts. But your books must be bad, or no publisher would pay for them. Uncle says they will never pay for anything good. How many have you written?”

“Only one.”

“And is it bad?” she persisted.

“Yes,” said he, starting, “very bad.”

“So is mine, so perhaps they’ll pay me, too. There is not a page fit for the eye of a young girl.” This she said with intense satisfaction. “Mr. McGregor, do you think that some day you and I might write a book together? Authors sometimes do.”

“Unfortunately, I am probably going to die, which might interfere with such an entrancing scheme.”

“Then I hope you will recover.”

Donald burst out laughing, and Helen, coming in, heard. She stood at the door for a few moments, unobserved, and then slipped quietly away. She had not the power to provoke that hearty laugh, so little May Tempest was a better companion for the invalid than herself. Her muscles tightened as she made this admission to her beating heart.

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“Now, tell me some more bad words,” coaxed May.

He looked at her and thought what a pity it would be to spoil her pretty innocence. She had laid her hand upon his knee with all the confidence of a child appealing to a grown-up person. It required an effort not to take her flowerlike face between his hands and kiss it.

“Don’t you know any more?” she asked, pouting a little.

“Badness doesn’t only consist in using ugly expressions,” he said, and saw the growing wonder in her eyes.

“Then what is it?”

“It is stealing,” he answered, quickly. “Or, if you want to be especially wicked, make your characters murder each other.”

“Oh-h!” breathed May, rapturously, “what a glorious idea! So they shall. Why, I’ll make a doctor who murders his patients, and pretends that he is trying to cure them. Could anything be worse than that? What is the matter, Mr. McGregor? You look just as if you had seen a ghost. Did something frighten you?”

“No—no—nothing,” he answered, and then reassured her by laughing. Under his moustache his lips were white. “Tell me some more about

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your book, Miss Tempest; you cannot think how deeply I am interested in it."

Thus encouraged, the girl chattered on and on, charming and diverting him, and the afternoon slipped swiftly by. Alas! the pleasure was short-lived, it seemed like theft, for what had a dying man to do with such golden hours?

The clock went steadily on, pointing with its inexorable fingers to the close of another afternoon. One more after this—and then! . . .

It was now time to go and meet the train that would bring his poor old parents here.

"Oh, must you go?" asked May. "I do wish you could stay with me. I like you better than anyone else in this Hotel."

"Perhaps we may have another talk before I have to die," he said, looking down on her.

"I don't see why you should die at all," grumbled May.

Donald stood stock still, gazing. He saw a sudden rush of tears rise in those blue eyes—they were easily provoked.

"No, don't die," whimpered May; "I don't want you to die at all."

"Perhaps I won't," he answered, and at once her sunny smile broke out again.

"Of course you won't," she said. "It would simply be stupid of you to go and die when you've

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only written one bad novel." She glanced up mischievously at the tall figure, and then dashed her hand across her eyes, and laughed again. "Of course you won't, *I* don't want you to."

"Such good wishes are prophetic," he said, gravely; "you cannot think how I appreciate them."

He turned away, and went to face the painful meeting before him. He shuddered when he thought of his old mother's tears, and the stolid pathos of his father's silence. He knew exactly what to expect, but he had brought them here, in obedience to Helen.

The Hotel omnibus was waiting to take him to the station.

CHAPTER III—*Treatment for Two Days*

M R. EDWARD DOPPING took good care to secure May's attendance in the Salle d'Attente on Friday morning. He had reduced her to abject submission, no one knew how, and she had not dared to go into hiding again this morning. She sat there, dejected, at one end of the sofa, beside her aunt, and Gustave Foucou was making many signals of cruel glee, which she pretended not to see.

"I never hid or ran away," said he.

Mr. Dopping put up his eyeglass and glared at this dangerous heretic, who had ventured to address good Protestants.

"I wouldn't be you for something this morning," put in Mr. Derwent, most unnecessarily. He was sitting at Miss Dopping's other side, and had to lean across her to speak to May. "You should have seen Dr. Deladoey's face yesterday when we told him that you were not to be found. He looked murderous. Then he said, 'Ah, never mind, *there is a to-morrow.*'"

"Did he, Aunt Alice?"

"I am afraid he did," acknowledged her aunt,

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blushing deeply because Mr. Derwent continued to lean over her.

"The doctor was naturally indignant that a girl of your age should behave so like a baby," rasped Mr. Dopping.

"Don't fret," said Mr. Derwent. "I'm going in just before you, and I'll tell him that you're weeping and repentant."

"Please don't," said May, trying hard to look unconcerned. "I don't mind what he says, or what he does, or what he thinks."

The door communicating with the Salle de Consultation opened with a jerk, and Mr. Derwent rose to go.

"I won't forget you," said he, passing May. At the same time he smiled straight into Miss Dopping's eyes. Was there a double meaning in his words?

May put up her shoulder and pouted. She looked over at Donald for sympathy, but he took no notice. He was sitting now between his parents, one of the queerest old couples the girl had ever seen. She and Gustave had been making fun at their expense, and she felt a shade of uneasiness lest Gustave should have betrayed her to that nice Mr. McGregor. The fact that Donald should be absorbed in other thoughts on this last visit of his to the consulting room never once occurred to

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her. She wondered what Mr. Derwent was saying to the doctor; no doubt she would have a bad time of it in there in a few minutes. How she hated this place, and Mr. Derwent, and the Specialist, and especially her uncle! How she longed to go home again! There was not one person here whom she would not be glad to escape; she hated them all; yes, Mr. McGregor, too, for he wouldn't look in her direction. He seemed to be thinking about nobody but himself and those two old creatures, who might have come out of a Noah's Ark. She'd be ashamed of such parents, so she would.

There were sounds coming from the Salle de Consultation, and her aunt rose hurriedly.

Gustave rubbed his hands as May went by.

"You did not come to me yesterday, Mademoiselle," said the doctor, after closing the door upon himself and these patients.

"No, I didn't. I was tired of coming to you so often."

"*Elle n'est pas méchante,*" murmured the doctor.

May said: "Oh, mais je suis méchante, *quand je ne puis pas avoir mong chemang.*"

He looked bewildered, as he always did when she spoke in his language, then a twinkle visited his eye and he chuckled.

The Specialist

“Et moi aussi, Mademoiselle.”

“Now, May, don’t be impudent,” burst forth her uncle.

“Mussyous,” said May, taking no notice of the wrathful interruption, “sometimes I forget to come to you. I forgot yesterday.”

“So you were tired of coming to me, Mademoiselle?”

“Sick of it.”

“Very good. Sit down, mon enfant. I can treat for two days in one.”

“What do you mean?” She was alarmed.

“Only this, Mademoiselle, that if you will not come to me each day, on the days when you do come, I shall be compelled, obliged to do the Treatment for those days that you were absent, also the Treatment for that day. It will not be pleasant for you, I fear, but it is a necessity.” While he spoke he made ostentatious preparations.

“Mussyous,” she exclaimed, in terror now, “I’ll never not be here again.”

“Mademoiselle, I think not.”

May burst out crying.

“May!” exclaimed her uncle.

“Oh, Edward, Mossoo, have mercy,” implored a gentle voice behind.

“Come,” said the doctor, “it is not a thing for which to weep.”

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“I only want to be treated for one day,” wailed May.

“There, there, mon enfant, I will not treat you at all if it makes you to weep.”

“This is ridiculous,” shouted her uncle; “she is not a child.”

The Specialist laughed, and lifted an instrument. “Maintenant,” said he.

“May, do you hear? Mongsere is waiting to treat you. Open your mouth at once.”

“I want first to make my will,” sobbed May.

“May, I command you to stop crying, and take your Treatment without any more fuss. You shall, you must. Do you hear me?”

“Tell me what you would have done to you,” suggested the doctor, and May uncovered one of her eyes to look at him, not understanding his tone. “I can do nothing that you do not wish,” said he.

“This is absurd, preposterous,” burst out Mr. Dopping. “We have brought her all this way at great expense, and she must and shall go through the Treatment. Open your mouth at once, May; how dare you behave in this ridiculous manner?”

“You may massage my ears,” sobbed May, “like you do to Aunt Alice. She says it doesn’t hurt.”

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“But you are not deaf, you do not require the massage.”

“I don’t care, I won’t have anything else done.”

“Eh bien,” sighed the doctor, snatching up the ear-massaging apparatus, “as you will.”

“I never knew anything so absurd,” stormed Mr. Dopping. “It is childish to treat her in this way; she’s spoilt enough already, in all conscience.”

“*Beang, je ne jamais,*” whispered May, taking the Specialist into her confidence, and when she departed she gave him a look so sly and naughty that between May and her uncle the doctor’s solemnity was broken up. He had to pause awhile before calling in the next patient. “It was well,” soliloquised the doctor, with a chuckle, “that Monsieur Dopping should know defeat. I have helped the little Mademoiselle to vanquish him.” He laughed outright as he put away the ear-massaging apparatus.

CHAPTER IV—*A Man of No Heart and All Brain*

“**I**T is really an honour to be operated on by such a man,” Donald had said to his old mother, “and you ought to be proud to think that your son is quite an interesting case to him.”

“But I dinna like operations,” she had persisted, in a quavering voice. “I’d sooner trust the dear Lord and leave Him to work His cure in nature’s way.”

It was useless trying to persuade her that in an operation lay his only chance of recovery, and he had given up the attempt, leaving it to Dr. Deladoey to convince her finally. Now the interview before to-morrow’s final event was about to take place, and he fell silent. He was sorry that it must be shared by his parents, but they both had insisted on coming in with him to see this Specialist, and the old lady meant to do her utmost to dissuade him from the operation. She had a superstitious dread of the very word.

Old McGregor laid his hand on Donald’s. He wished to call his attention to the fact that the doctor had come for him, and it was their turn.

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Starting up, Donald offered his arm to his mother, and the old man followed behind. He tottered slightly as he followed those two who were his whole world, and he turned sick with apprehension as he entered the Salle de Consultation. His son, his one, dear son was before him, changed by the ravages of disease from a big, braw Scotchman into a sickly-looking Englishman. Even his speech was English, and to the old man's bewildered mind this seemed to be as much a part of that mysterious disease as the fact that Donald had spent most of his life in England. Everything was strange and puzzling; his head was still dinnin with the roll of wheels, the rattle of coupling-irons. Now and then he seemed to hear the ding-dong of Swiss signals, or the hoarse and alarming whistle of a steamer, and all the while his heart was overwhelmed with a dread too hideous for words. His son, his only, his dear son, in danger!

He became aware of the fact that Donald had introduced him to the great Specialist, and it was a painful shock to him to find that the man who was to operate upon his son was of such an insignificant height. He saw his son gazing at the man, as if he wanted to convey some sort of intelligence to him, but he saw also that the Specialist would not respond to Donald's entreating look.

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“I have myself but small hope that we shall succeed,” the doctor was saying—he was determined not to “hoodwink” Donald’s parents. The Specialist had had enough of this thing “hoodwink.” “And for that reason I persuaded him to send for you. He wished not to molest you, but the occasion required it.”

“Canna ye cure him, sir, without an operation? —I misdoubt operations,” entreated the mother.

“This is a crisis, Madame, that must be met in the spirit of philosophy. Without the operation there is no cure. You son will tell you that Monsieur Duval of Lausanne has pronounced incurable this disease.”

“But is there aye fear that our son will dee?” cried the old lady, frantically.

“None whatever, mother,” Donald eagerly interposed, while Dr. Deladoey gravely answered, “Every fear, Madame.”

“Donald, Donald, I canna let ye tempt the dear Lord. I canna—you’re all that we have. Why doesna your fayther speak to ye? Tell him, Malcolm, that there never was a McGregor had an operation.”

The old man only shook his head.

“I told you how it would be,” burst out Donald, turning to the doctor, in sudden anger. “How much better if we had left them at home in peace.”

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There fell a silence, and Donald shrank. He found himself the centre of three looks that pierced his heart. His father's, mute but comprehensive; his mother's, scared. But perhaps the look that hurt him most was the Specialist's.

"It is well," said Dr. Deladoey, at last withdrawing his eyes, "that I regard this patient but as an interesting case, of use to science and to me. If I had for him a personal feeling of affection, to perform this operation might be an impossibility. As it is—fortunately, I have—not."

The doctor had turned his back, and the two old people were stricken dumb. Who was this monster in human form that could address such words to their dear son?

As for Donald, he had not another word to say. This interview, like all other things of the material world, was bringing him nothing but fresh pain and disappointment.

"And now," said the Specialist, briskly, "I will attend to my work; my time is of value to me. I cannot waste it with too much conversation. Sit down, Monsieur, I wish once more to examine the throat."

He blew his nose with vigour, and made a great bustling. A Specialist must be a man of no heart and all brain.

CHAPTER V—*On the Wane*

IT was his last day, and already that day was on the wane. Donald had hunted up and down, restless and unsatisfied, searching for Helen. So little was left to him now that he felt almost angry that there should be any difficulty in obtaining these last few gifts of life. He did not know that Helen had waited for him all the morning, when she was free, and that her suspense was becoming unbearable. She was afraid that he meant to go to his death without one more effort to obtain speech of her. Then she had turned resolutely back to face that other intolerable anxiety which she was unable to confide to human ears, and which was to reach its crisis about the same time as Donald came to his.

Now the shadows began to lengthen, and once again she was set free from her attendance upon her father, and came out to look for Donald in all their favourite haunts. So it was that at last they met each other. Donald came forward eagerly, and she looked at him, smiling, but she did not speak.

“Let us find a seat,” said he. “I have tired myself out searching for you.”

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She was still unable to find her voice, but she led him to the nearest seat.

"I thought you were hiding from me, Miss Lester."

"How could you?" she managed to answer, and then her voice returned. "I waited for you all morning long, and I—I thought you knew that I am obliged to devote the afternoons to my father."

"This morning I had to interview the doctor, and attend to my parents. You knew that they had come, and I should have thought that you might have made an especial effort for your second patient on such a day as this."

She had no reply to this—the oppression at her throat was terrible.

"You are guilty, if I die under it."

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed.

"It was by your advice that I agreed to it."

"But you told me that the alternative was certain death—this is a chance of life."

"You also are to blame for the appearance of my poor old parents on the scene. They are now lying down, exhausted. They have followed me about all this miserable day with bleeding hearts."

Helen's head sank; she was unable to defend herself against these unfair accusations.

Then he saw her face, and was filled with re-

On the Wane

morse. "What am I saying to you?" he burst out. "You have been my true counsellor and friend, and I am ready to face death to-morrow with more courage because I have had conversation with you."

Every word he spoke sank into the deepest places of her inner consciousness.

"Your sympathy has saved me from despair, and I want to thank you. I consider that it was my best fortune to meet you here."

"Please do not talk like this," said Helen. "I feel—it hurts me—I have done nothing at all to merit it."

"Don't call it nothing," he answered. "A friendly word may sometimes be the saving of a life. I only hope you may never have the experience of desolation I felt that day we met on the road to the Beer Garden. We had a somewhat unusual conversation on that day. Do you remember it?"

"It is incredible even to suppose that I could ever forget it."

"And now, my day is on the wane, the shadows are lengthening. It will be over by this time to-morrow."

"Oh, I hope, I trust, I believe—that it will be successfully over. It must, it cannot fail."

"Why not?"

The Specialist

“Because it would be cruel, and horrible, and unjust if it failed.”

Donald looked at her in surprise.

“Unjust?”

“Yes,” burst out Helen, “bitterly unjust.”

“I thought you had larger persuasions,” he said, slowly; “that the good of the whole existing state of things was more to your mind. It must be useful to humanity to get rid of its weak and useless members, and after all, it will make no difference to the world when I go under.”

Helen moved restlessly. She knew that the great personal question exposes the absence of true philosophy, but she could not stand the test.

“I cannot, and will not believe that Dr. Dela-doe, who is so skilful, will not succeed with you.”

“He did not succeed with Courtenay.”

“That was quite a different matter—the man came to him dying; and however I may shrink from his personality, at least I do believe in his genius. You must go to him with confidence.”

“Why should you shrink from his personality?” asked Donald, rather sharply.

“It is a matter of instinct, or prejudice; I hardly know him.”

“And I,” said Donald, “who know him well, almost fancy dying under those marvellous hands.”

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Helen shuddered; she could not understand the infatuation of so many of Dr. Deladoey's patients. Little did she dream how few hours were to pass over her head before she would herself experience the very infatuation she could not now comprehend.

"I wonder if you would accept a little souvenir from me," said Donald, breaking a painful silence, in which Helen had become aware of the jar of disagreement. She turned to him eagerly, thankful for anything that might establish harmony again. "I have something that I'd like to give you, in memory of some inner revelations, rather remarkable on so short acquaintance. I have been afraid of offering it to you, but perhaps you won't mind, now?"

He drew something from his pocket, with hesitation.

"It is only an old pen, Miss Lester—the pen which wrote that unfortunate book. It used to be my favourite, but now I never want to use it again. It is my fancy that I should like this pen in future to be guided by a hand that can write with it nothing but good. Would you mind keeping it in memory of me, and of my deep gratitude to you?"

Helen gazed at him, her sight blurred. The voice that answered him trembled.

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“Would I mind, did you say? Would I mind? Do you mean that you will really give me the pen that wrote your book? I simply cannot tell you how much I shall value such a souvenir.”

Donald hastily placed it in her hand; he did not seem to want her to see it. Afterwards she discovered that she had received a gift of some value, for he had given her a gold fountain pen of the best make.

“In accepting this,” she said, “I shall think myself forgiven.”

“Forgiven? Who has anything to forgive *you*?”

“Have not you? My unguarded words about your book.”

“Come,” said Donald, “I am not going to allow you to take back and undo a single act or word of friendship which you have granted to me. In life or death you have become my creditor, and the debt I owe you I can never hope to pay.”

“Helen, Helen!” sounded impatiently from the distance.

She started up.

“That is my father; I must go.”

Donald seized one of her hands in both his own, and for a moment clung to it. She stood motionless, as if his touch paralysed her, and their eyes met.

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“My friend,” whispered Donald, hoarsely, and then he added, lower, “God bless you.”

“God?” answered Helen. “Did *you* say—God?”

He bowed his head. “When you are with me—so is God.”

“Then you do believe in Him?”

“In your presence I do.”

“Oh, God!” breathed Helen, staring up into the evening sky. “God!”

Overwhelmed with emotion, she drew her hand away, and went in obedience to the voice that was calling her more and more angrily.

Donald sat still, and he was desolate. Again he had been on the point of saying impulsive words he could never have recalled, and again they had been interrupted. Perhaps it was better so—a man so near to death throws himself wildly upon any human support that he can find.

The evening sunshine slanted on him. Everything in nature was sweet and calm. After all, the fever and unrest of life are a mistake. The world is not worth winning, humanity is a poor concern; it is well to be laying it down, ceasing from it. He began to wish that he could die here, alone, like a wild thing; that he could creep into some quiet hole, and with nothing round him but the undisturbing sounds of nature, could lay his head

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down upon the earth, and go out. How much better than that agitating scene he expected on the morrow, those wild farewells, those tears and entreaties, those dreadful moments when his poor old parents would have to be dragged away from him. He shuddered in anticipation.

Ah! Another interruption. A quick step was approaching him. He looked up, and Dr. Deladoey stood before him, critically surveying his face.

“Well? What is it?” asked Donald, conscious of trepidation.

“How are you, my friend? Preparing for the morrow?”

“I did that ages ago. You needn’t bother; I’m not going to back out at the last moment. You shall have the game in your own hands to-morrow.”

Dr. Deladoey began walking up and down in front of him, those hands behind his back. Donald’s eyes were fixed on them in admiration.

“I can imagine your feelings of triumph at this moment, Moosyou. You have actually secured that case which is to make your fame, and so eager are you, that you have been unable to keep away from sight of your victim.”

The doctor stopped short in front of him, and fixed his piercing eyes steadily upon his face again.

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“It must be rather—quaint—to stand thus upon the threshold of fame, though I suppose it will be a little awkward for you if you fail. Moosyou Duval thought the operation was impossible. Now, it’s no use denying it, Moosyou, unless you imagine that I’m as deaf as Miss Dopping. Moosyou Duval has a voice like the last trump.”

“You heard what he said?”

“Of course I did. He uses ugly expressions, Moosyou, but you need have no fear; no one but Moosyou Duval, yourself, and I, know that they were ever spoken; and I may as well die under your knife at once, instead of lingering on useless to science, and I am willing to undertake whatever blame might be attached to my death for the sake of that rudimentary chance that has come to you of establishing your fame. It is an honour but few of your patients dare hope to attain.” Here a cough interrupted him, and then, under strange excitement, Donald burst out: “You are never going to forget that we are nothing to each other?”

“I must not forget,” answered Dr. Deladoey. “I never do. You are no more to me than”

“An interesting case, a thing, a patient—I know it by this time, you see, Moosyou. It is a daring thing to accuse you of possessing a human heart, but sometimes I have suspected that insult.”

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The doctor was staring hard at something, his eyes dry and sparkling. All his attention had become absorbed.

"I even had some idea that you cared—for me."

"That I cared for you? Mon Dieu!"

"It is preposterous, I know," continued Donald, his peculiar sentiment for the doctor asserting itself painfully. "We have met almost daily for over six weeks, under circumstances which move the strangest emotions, but none so strange as this. You shouldn't have come here to-night if you had not wanted to hear words that in ordinary life would not pass my lips. The privileges of the dying are great."

"So much conversation is not necessary," rapped out the doctor, in his fiercest style. "It has the effect of irritating the throat and agitating the mind. Can you not be content to let these things sleep?"

"At certain moments human love is necessary, Moosyou—this is one of them."

"As you will," cried the doctor, falling into the seat Helen had vacated. "You shall have whatever you desire. Yes, I love you, my friend, and I love you with much regret. It is unfortunate when a physician forgets his profession and regards his patients as friends and brothers. When

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this is done by a surgeon, the offence becomes unpardonable. . . . My friend, my brother!"

Donald held his breath. The next word threatened to destroy his composure.

"We have not time in this planet for indulging in hearts," continued the Specialist, in a tone that somehow calmed Donald instead of upsetting him, "but now and then we discover the disturbing things. It is not suitable for men; more so for women, who require the tender feelings to keep them living." His voice dropped.

"Are you thinking of any special woman?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the doctor, starting.

"Come, divert the waning hours of my last day by confessing to your brother, Moosyou, that you have fallen a victim to the universal curse. Who is the woman?"

"I have heard," said the doctor, but his cheek grew ruddy, "that you are a writer of romances. Do not allow your imagination to overtake your reason, mon ami."

"Why should you be ashamed of a natural and godlike weakness, Moosyou? I should be in love myself, but for this sword of Damocles. Perhaps with the same girl—I refer to little May Tempest."

Dr. Deladoey leaned back and laughed.

"Ah, yes, that is so, your guess is correct, it

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could not be otherwise. I have an interview that is delightful with Mademoiselle each morning, except on those mornings when Mademoiselle puts herself into concealment. On those mornings I am desolate."

"I am not joking," said Donald. "I intend to marry Miss Tempest, if I recover."

"Then you consider her, too, worth talking to?"

"Worth talking to!" echoed Donald. "I never said she was anything of the sort—that has nothing to do with it. A man doesn't want to talk to his wife."

"No? He cares only to look at her, to admire, to let her do the work of the house. But sometimes the beauty of a woman fades."

"Yes, worse luck."

"And does the little Mademoiselle consent thus to sell herself to be the ornament of your house, and its servant?"

"I have no doubt she will, not the slightest," returned Donald, with the vision of May appealing to him, and the memory of her trustful hand upon his knee.

"So that is your idea of marriage?" said the doctor. "My friend, it is not mine." He paused; his eyes now seemed to rest upon something far away, and his face looked very tired. "I have an idea, a sort of idea, that it is not a high conception."

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“I need something bright and young and pretty about me when I’m at work,” argued Donald. He felt that his position needed defence. “I could not stand a woman who did nothing but argue cleverly with me in my spare moments.”

“So these women who are worth talking to, do nothing but argue,” said the doctor, musing. “That, again, is a new idea to me. I do not know much of women; an author must know more, he is a student of human nature. I study the body rather than the mind. I am very ignorant. Your body, my friend, is giving me much concern at this moment.”

“Because you know I won’t get through the operation.”

Dr. Deladoey eyed him askance. “On the contrary, you will,” he answered firmly, “though,” and here the rigidity of his features relaxed, “you have furnished me with sufficient cause to make it impossible.”

“One might as well hunt the proverbial needle, as drag out a word you do not intend to part with,” said Donald.

“I do not follow, Monsieur; the language of idioms is too difficult for me, I am no advanced linguist. And now, I go to make my final arrangements for your comfort. I have had enough to do to-day. I have but just returned

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from visiting my—a—patient at a distance, and I have Monsieur Duval to entertain to-night. To-morrow, while I attend my patients here, you will establish yourself early in the room I have had made ready for you at my hospital pension. You will neither eat nor drink after six o'clock in the morning, when I allow a glass of milk. *Au revoir, mon frère*; avoid all that excites, and so secure a night's repose before the events of the morrow."

He departed briskly, stepping forward with sharp, even strides, and looking after the man's figure. Donald wondered how he had ever ventured to pry into the secrets of that life. His heart sank when the figure disappeared, and a sudden chill seized him. Rising hastily, he made his way back through the grounds.

He was arrested on the way by the sound of unexpected voices. With no intention of playing the eavesdropper, he once more found himself in that position. The sound of May's bright laughter held him spellbound.

"I am leaving this place, leaving it at once."

"I don't wonder," returned the gay young voice that Donald had just been claiming for his own.

"Yes, I would have left it to-day—the doctor has insulted me—but—but, Miss Tempest, for you."

"What in the world have I to do with it?" piped

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up May, evidently interested, and Donald drew himself bolt upright, and had no room for any scruple left in his mind. He was ready to do battle on the spot, if that were necessary.

“Can you not guess, my—dear?”

“No,” promptly returned May, “I never can guess. Now, do tell me, Mr. Crabbe, what the doctor said to you; I should so like to know.”

“Then I will tell you all,” said Mr. Crabbe, as if he now meant to make a clean sweep of his whole life. “I insisted upon knowing what he intended to do to me with his battery, and I refused to submit to any Treatment which might cause the mucous membrane to bleed. Injure the mucous membrane once, and it can never be cured.”

“Yes,” interrupted May, eagerly, “that is just what I think myself.”

“I said to him, what *you* already know, that the mucous membrane is the most delicate tissue of the human body, and the impudent fellow said that he had no objection. Then I declared that I would have nothing done that causes it to bleed, and he said, ‘Very good, it will be unnecessary for you to come to me again.’ Insulting ruffian that he is.”

“I wish he’d say that to me,” mournfully commented May, and Donald felt a smile creeping

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round his lips. He leaned against a tree and waited.

“It is a great shame that you should have to submit to his intolerable butchery—there is nothing whatever the matter with you, and it is an outrageous piece of swindling on his part to pretend that there is the slightest necessity for his operations. No wonder he goes by the name of Butcher. Without doubt he long ago decided to make money out of the ignorance of people like your uncle and aunt, who have not discovered his manner of cheating them.”

“I haven’t time to stay here chattering about nothing,” May interrupted, sharply, and Donald heaved a sigh of relief. He was pleased to hear her vexation because her uncle and aunt were depreciated by a stranger. “It was Mr. Derwent who sent me out to you,” continued May. “He said he thought you wanted me. Did you? Or was it another of his inventions?”

“Of course I did—I always want you.”

“What for? Please tell me quick, Mr. Crabbe, I want to go back to my work. Is anything the matter with you?”

“Stay a minute,” returned the other voice, in a tone that made Donald hot with wrath. “You must try to spare me a little of your busy time. So you are industrious?”

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“Very,” answered May, with candour.

“You are a good nurse, are you not, Miss Tempest?”

“No, I hate sick people.”

“Mr. Derwent has told me something different, my dear. He cannot speak highly enough of your ability as a nurse.”

“Hadn’t you better tuck your shawl closer round your neck?”

“Ah, yes; Mr. Derwent was right. Miss May, when I am ill, I have often thought what a good thing it would be to have a wife.”

Donald recovered himself with a start, and turned on his heel. The thought had just stabbed him to the quick that he, a dying man, had no right at all to interfere. Besides this, he had been guilty of a dishonourable action. That bright child was born for life and health and sunshine. A man standing upon a grave must turn his head away, and stumble on into the dark.

CHAPTER VI—*Early in the Morning*

THE sound of a contrevent swinging gave evidence of someone rising early. It was as if the great Hotel had opened one eye, and was peering out upon the mysterious things of dawn while all the rest of the world was asleep. A warm flood of light was in the sky, but the sun had not yet appeared over the mountains, and the soft blue mists of night still lingered.

A figure stood motionless for some time at the open window, watching the advance of morning. No sight could have been more inspiriting, but the eyes that watched were heavy. Helen Lester had been sleepless that night.

“This is the Day,” she whispered. “It is creeping into the world just like every other day—as if it were nothing in particular!”

Presently she left the window and dressed. She bound up the splendid masses of her hair without once looking into her mirror.

“It is awful to be a woman,” Helen said.

Then she went softly downstairs, searching for some way out of the Hotel.

Early in the Morning

It was not difficult. All she had to do was to open a window, and by this time she was able to manage the contrevents. A grim little smile touched her lips as she thought of the astonishment of the waiter who first discovered an open window downstairs.

Helen thus escaped from the Hotel. She felt that on this morning it was necessary to be out with the eternal wonder of the Dawn—mists dissolving as the sunlight creeps upon them, flowers opening their petals at the caress of the warm beams of light, the grey old mountains blushing before virgin day.

“He picked up my flowers that afternoon,” she mused. These first moments were all for Donald. Her feet were carrying her along the road that led to the Beer Garden.

She turned back to look at the Hotel before the winding road hid it from her sight. She knew quite well where Donald’s window was, and there, too, she saw her father’s, shutting him in safe and sound for still another hour or two. Her own was like one black eye gazing after her—not another was yet open.

“It is an awful silence women have to keep,” said Helen, looking at those windows.

The road to the Beer Garden wound on before her, a white trail stretching away between the

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mountains as if into infinity. She walked slower now, almost timidly; she seemed to be trespassing into phenomena not fit for human eyes. The dew was lying in great glittering drops along every blade of grass; the solemnity of the hour compelled her to step softly.

At last she stopped, almost startled to find herself at the spot where her friendship with Donald began. She saw the stone on which he had sat, the same stone, and for a long time she stood motionless, recalling every word that they had spoken. It began to appear strange that such acute reminiscence should not in reality drive her back to that hour.

The sun was now appearing over the mountains, and the birds from drowsy piping had begun their morning concert. A fresh stir of life ran through the valley, and everything radiated. Helen raised her face and looked round, trying to impress every smallest detail of scenery and surrounding upon her memory. She had named this spot her own in all the world. Her own in secret feeling, in memory, in choice. She laid her hand upon the stone—Donald's stone. This was the dedication of her life to his; it was as much a vow as if she had spoken words aloud. Then her fingers stole into her bosom, and closed tight over something there—his gift to her—“In memory of

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some inner revelations rather remarkable on such short acquaintance”—pregnant words, accompanied by his significant gift.

She had come here on purpose to recall every one of those inner revelations; not one must be lost, for they had accomplished the miracle, binding her immortal soul to his for all eternity—doubly his if on this last day of the short week of their acquaintance he should pass out of mortality into the sphere where those we love are, indeed, safe to us forevermore. It is only down here that we are not sure of them. But Helen had not yet reached in thought the point where this element of uncertainty comes in.

A chaffinch suddenly burst into his thrilling song, and Helen started, electrified. That was the sound of promise, the major key of nature, the voice of Donald's bird that piped to him in the supreme moments of his life. That it should pipe to her, too, in such a moment, was only natural—surely there was something most significant in the joyful promise of that voice bursting forth in ecstasy just now? Courage came pouring into her heart, and her face was transfigured with something better than colour.

Now she could go back, and it was time, for the day was here, and had to be begun. It would not be long before this rolling earth had travelled on

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into another night, when the day now here would be over. A day is but a short period, the longest and most awful comes rapidly to an end.

She looked round again, drinking in all the beauty and solemnity of the scene. It was well for her that she had stolen these moments from the reluctant hand of Nature, who hides all her best and most beautiful secrets from man, by telling them only when he is not yet awake.

And now she had to go back. It was time to face the Day.

When the Hotel once again came in sight there were many open contrevents, and Helen heard the swishing noise of the gardener raking the gravel on the paths, a noise that used to annoy her when she woke late. Its familiar rattle seemed now to welcome her back, like a stranger returning from a far country.

Her father stood on the steps of the Hotel, and on catching sight of him, Helen's heart began to hammer.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Lester, "so you're up in good time for once. That's fortunate, to-day."

"Why to-day?" asked Helen, striving to speak unconcernedly.

"It is the seventeenth—isn't it?" His eyes glanced restlessly up and down, as if he were trying to remember something. Helen saw with

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a shudder that he had a time-table in his hands.
“Lausanne is not far away.”

“It is a good way,” answered Helen, as steadily as she could for the horrid terror at her heart; “too far to think of going there while we are at Donverey.”

“I don’t know, I What’s the date, Helen?”

“It is the month of June, father. We need not trouble about exact dates in this place; one day is the same as another. Come, let us go in to breakfast; we shall be almost the first down this morning.”

She took his arm and led him to the Salle-à-manger, and outwardly she gave no signal of agitation. She managed to steal his time-table away from him and diverted his mind by plenty of brisk talk.

It was Mr. Lester’s invariable custom to take a short, smart walk alone immediately after breakfast, instead of joining the general stampede towards the Salle d’Attente, and he was in consequence nearly always the last patient to be treated. Helen watched him start this morning as usual, and dared not propose that she should accompany him. She stood at the Hotel door, absorbed in an anxiety that is seldom experienced, fortunately for us poor mortals, and the sunshine

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she had been out to welcome this morning poured over her disregarded. It was a golden, brilliant day—not a day upon which tragedies should happen, lurking treacherously behind the sunny hours. Yet the sunshine pouring over her seemed to promise otherwise.

One of the Hotel carriages drew up at the door before her, and suddenly her pulses began to throb. This must have come, of course, to take Donald McGregor away to the hospital pension in the town!

“Come, mother,” she heard a voice behind her say; “we’re going to drive down in fine style.”

Helen turned and found herself staring into Donald’s eyes. He advanced and clasped her hand.

“I knew you’d be here to see me off,” he said.

“You are going early,” she managed to reply. Her throat was dry, she hardly knew how to speak. “I am afraid there is nothing else I can do for you.”

“You can promise me one thing,” he returned, dropping his voice. “In case—anything happens”—the words were whispered very close to Helen’s ear—“will you help them?” He motioned towards his poor old parents, who were at this moment in a state of bewilderment piteous to behold. “They will sorely need a few friendly

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words, and there is no one in the world I would rather think of speaking them than you. . . . Mother, this is Miss Helen Lester, who has been taking care of me—I have not had a chance of introducing you before."

"Gawd bless ye, my dear," said the old lady, kissing Helen, distractedly, and looking round with a dazed expression. Old Mr. McGregor had already tumbled into the carriage, and she hastened to follow him, seeing which the old man scrambled out again, to put her in.

"You see, they are agitated, they hardly know what they are about. You must excuse them, Miss Lester. Think of me at one o'clock, and send me a good wish."

Helen did not answer—she could not.

"Good-bye," he said, turning full upon her, and once more grasping her hand.

"Not good-bye," she faltered, "au revoir."

Donald was moved, and he impulsively raised her hand to his lips—the circumstances excused this liberty. He held her hand tight, he clung to it until he had to go, and loosed it reluctantly. Then he put his head out of the window as the vehicle drove away, to catch one more glimpse of the friendly face sending its last inspiring smile after him. The glory of the morning shone round Helen as that smile beamed from her eyes. For

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one moment she experienced the triumph of certainty, *for he had kissed her*—then the carriage turned at the gate, and back upon her swept a desolation beyond description.

She stood still upon the steps, not daring to stir. It seemed to her that if she moved an inch the composure so vitally important to her now would desert her. She had to act—to act promptly—to act with consummate wisdom. All the concentration of her mind was needed now to meet the calamity advancing upon her father. She must act at once.

Suddenly her mind was made up, and she turned and sped down the corridor leading to Dr. Dela-doeys' rooms. He had arrived, she knew, for she had in a sub-conscious way become aware of his presence in the Hotel. It was not yet quite surgery hours, so he would be alone. She ran to the outer door of the Salle de Consultation, and rapped loudly.

CHAPTER VII—“*Little Confidence*”

HELEN LESTER was gasping when the doctor let her in. She gave the door a great push to shut out everything else, and hide herself from detection. It was of the first importance that her father should never find out that she had come to the Specialist.

Dr. Deladoey stood and looked at her with an air of astonishment, not unmixed with displeasure.

“Has Mademoiselle had an accident?”

“No, no, Mussioo.”

He waited until her breath came normally, and then raised his eyebrows questioningly.

“Mussioo, can you tell me how long you will want my father?”

“His is one of those cases in which there is no great importance to remain long, Mademoiselle.”

Her face became old and haggard.

“What is it that Mademoiselle would say to me?”

“Mussioo, I want my father to be kept from going to Lausanne to-day.”

Dr. Deladoey placed a chair for her, and seated

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himself exactly opposite. It was the greatest day in his career. He had come early to the Hotel to hurry forward his morning's work, and this interruption was untimely.

“Mussioo, he *must* be prevented going there!”
The words were a cry.

“Mademoiselle has a reason, it is urgent,” said the Specialist.

“He must not go,” repeated Helen. She was desperate, her fingers were locked together so that the knuckles were white at the strain.

“Mademoiselle is willing to confide in me?”

Helen looked at the impenetrable mask of his features, and a sickening shudder went through her. How was it possible to confide such trouble to this man—a stranger, a human being with a face inhumanly hard?

“I cannot—it is not possible.”

“That is a pity,” said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders. “Much help cannot be given where there is little confidence.”

“Oh, Mussioo, you do not know what it would be if you could only prevent my father going to Lausanne to-day only to-day, Mussioo!”

“I think I may predict so much,” said the Specialist, “if I can be persuaded that there is sufficient cause, and if he comes to the Treatment as usual.”

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“There is sufficient cause, Mussioo; there is, there is, indeed. Oh, Mussioo, believe it, and if you will only do this thing, you will do a deed for which there are no words of gratitude that I can speak.”

Dr. Deladoey rose abruptly and opened the door for her to go. The agony of her appeal seemed to have affected him not at all; he appeared all impatience to conclude the interview. She stared at him, and then, with one deep sob, she turned and left him. A sense of failure smote her dumb. Much confidence in that man, indeed! Yet he it was who presided over the fates of this awful day.

After she had gone, the Specialist took a sharp turn up and down the room.

“It is evident,” said he, stopping suddenly, “that the reason for this entreaty is urgent. There is that written large all over the countenance of Mademoiselle Lester which would inspire to admiration. He, too, has reported her the only woman with whom a man may converse, and find it worth his time! Ah, my friend, what is this mistake you are contemplating? What if she is four years or five your senior? Why should there be this rule that a man must marry one who is younger than himself? Does the fraction of a decade in which we occupy the flesh signify within

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the narrow span, so that five years or ten divide entirely two human beings who are otherwise adapted to each other? Bah! Had the difference been on the other side, no words would have been uttered deprecatory of this arrangement. But all men have not my conception of marriage." Then he stood still, thinking, and presently a broad grin spread over his features. "Yes," said he, "I am justified—Monsieur Lester is one of my patients with whom I am not *en rapport*. I have a notion that he will not go to Lausanne to-day. And now, to work. I have no time to lose."

The Salle d'Attente was filling, and the fortunate first-comer sprang up the moment Dr. Deladoey's door opened. But he motioned the patient back, and advanced into the room, looking sharply round. That person for whom he looked was not here, and Dr. Deladoey passed out into the corridor. At the far end he caught sight of Helen and her father, and their words came echoing towards him.

"I tell you, I have a train to catch. I haven't time for the Treatment. I'm too late now to get my turn for a couple of hours."

"It's still very early, father. You might at least sit in the Salle d'Attente on the chance of an interview."

"Don't be absurd; loose my arm. You are to come up at once and pack my bag."

“Little Confidence”

“Bon jour, Monsieur.”

Mr. Lester turned at the doctor’s polite greeting, and scowled.

“Is it that Monsieur is in a hurry to catch a train?”

“Yes; I am going to Lausanne by the mid-day express.”

“To Lausanne? Ah, yes, but I do not advise you, Monsieur. If you consult me, I interdict Lausanne.”

“Why?” Mr. Lester had become excited.

“Because I consider it not a good place for you. On the contrary, I could mention some places close by where the air is excellent. Saint Croix, as an instance. But why seek better air than that of Donvery? My advice is to stay in Donvery while you can, and so derive a full benefit from the Treatment. You will be less likely to take the fever of India if you let me fortify you against it?”

During his speech Helen stepped back into the shade. Something like a sneer curled her lip. Alas, she would have to act alone—much use this sort of argument would be just now!

“Then there are the baths and pulverisations,” she heard the Specialist saying, in that indifferent tone of his, “and these much increase the value of your sojourn here. But if you certainly wish

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to travel to-day, and feel that your time is limited, I will for once, break my rules, and introduce you to the Salle de Consultation by the outer door, when you will have no wasted time of impatience in the Salle d'Attente."

Thus invited, Mr. Lester unwillingly complied, and Helen watched them walk down the corridor together and disappear into the Salle de Consultation. She was not able to guess what might pass between them in there, but she had now lost hope and waited outside in despondency.

Meantime Dr. Deladoey had been carefully examining his unwilling patient, and had ostentatiously drawn a deep breath, and whistled softly.

"Monsieur," said he, "I will have to call upon you to exhibit that courage which I find in the English, for I discover the necessity of giving you some pain, which I will mitigate to the utmost of my ability. It is important that I should operate at once, and so save you from a more serious danger."

While he thus spoke, he administered a surprising quantity of cocaine, and then prepared his battery. With stolid endurance Mr. Lester sat through the operation that followed. The doctor's face was impenetrable when he hung up his instrument again.

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“How do you feel now, Monsieur?”

“I am going to Lausanne to-day,” spluttered the patient.

“Ah? Very good; I have nothing to say against it, but I will merely request you, in the form of a command, that you should retire to your room and rest an hour. There may be pain in your throat after the effects of the cocaine have worn off, and it is necessary for you to be calm in order to be ready for your journey.”

“I mean to go by the mid-day express.”

“Very good,” said Dr. Deladoey, bowing him out.

Then he went for his next patient, and having despatched two or three as rapidly as possible, he ran upstairs and knocked at Mr. Lester’s door.

He found him tearing up and down the room, with his hand at his throat, and Helen on her knees, packing a portmanteau. Her face was set and white; she had given way to dumb despair.

“Is the throat troublesome?” questioned the doctor.

“It is outrageous, I am in agony,” burst out Mr. Lester. “But I am going to Lausanne by the mid-day express.”

“I thought it possible that you might be in some discomfort from the Treatment this morning, Monsieur, so I have brought you up a draught

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that will administer relief in order that you may be ready for your journey."

Helen raised her head and stared at him. Was the man a devil?

"Compose yourself, Monsieur. Lie down upon this sofa for a few minutes. It is necessary to gain a short repose before the fatigue of travelling. You will find much relief from this medicine."

Mr. Lester angrily obeyed, and swallowed the potion as directed.

"I must now request or command—insist, that you shall lie still for half an hour while Mademoiselle completes the preparations for your journey. *Au revoir.*"

As he left the room he glanced at Helen, and chuckled. "Monsieur Lester will not visit Lausanne to-day," he said to himself, as he sped back to his duties.

Before the doctor had reached his rooms again Mr. Lester's eyes had closed, and he was breathing stentorously. Helen stood and stared at him, and while she watched, he fell into a profound slumber. She stood transfixed, her heart throbbing noisily. Was it possible? Had the Specialist really come to the rescue in this magnificent manner? The indignation she had felt against the doctor now began to recoil against herself. Ah, that man was worthy of confidence. It had been

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her unworthy and suspicious heart which had failed to trust one so reliable.

And now she had time to think, to plan. The one and only thing that mattered to her father was to prevent his journey to Lausanne on this one day. Could it not be compassed? The femme-de-chambre had already done her work in this room; she would not visit it again until it was time to shut the contrevents. The window was too high from the ground to make exit possible that way. If her father were unable to get out by the door, he could not possibly escape; he would be saved—and once this day was over, he would be ready to thank her on his knees for having rescued him. There he lay, in a profound slumber. It never occurred to her to be alarmed—she had at least sufficient confidence in the doctor now to feel no anxiety over his methods.

What if she locked her father in and left him? She could keep watch outside, she could listen all the while. It seemed the only thing to do. If she stayed inside he might awaken in a passion of wrath and compel her to let him out.

She put biscuits upon the table, and gently covered her father with a rug. Then she left him and took up her solitary watch outside.

Having despatched his last patient that morning, Dr. Deladoey ran upstairs once again, and

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found Helen in the passage, leaning against a little window ledge from which she could see Donvery stretching away below.

"Oh, Mussio, how can I thank you?" she faltered, starting forward. "He is in a stupor. Can you tell me what to do when he awakes?"

"Mademoiselle need feel no anxiety, the awakening will be natural, but Monsieur her father will probably complain of stupidity in the head, and will wish to go to bed, when he will sleep well and comfortably, and awaken normal in the morning. He will slumber now for many hours. . . . It was necessary to operate this morning with some severity, and to administer a drug after the operation."

He would not wait for Helen's smile; he fled. Upon this day he had not time for indulging in jokes—yet this was one of the best jokes he had originated for many a day. A few minutes later Helen, from her window, saw his tricycle on the Donvery Road, and knew that he was riding to the hospital pension where Donald lay, waiting for his operation.

The electric bell began its lively summons to the déjeuner, and Helen started. She was conscious of hunger and exhaustion. Dare she leave this post of vantage? The doctor had said that her father would not awaken—he was locked in,

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she had the key in her pocket, and there was no one about to liberate him. The doctor had said that her father would not awaken—and her conscience smote her to think that she could possibly feel any doubt. The man knew all things, his knowledge was supernatural, his power uncanny. With one moment at the door, listening to the silence within, her mind was made up. She needed sustenance, she was far too healthy to undergo excessive strain without food—for Helen Lester was not neurotic.

Through the *déjeuner* she sat with scarcely an outward sign of the supreme emotions raging within her. She heard the clock strike one, and shuddered. It was the critical hour of Donald's life, the time when he was passing through its crisis. She looked up and down the table, and saw all the people laughing and chatting just as usual, though at this very moment one of their number was undergoing the operation that meant almost certain death. Only yesterday he had been here, too, and his vacant seat stood as a reminder of him.

“Let's see; McGregor's operation comes off to-day, doesn't it?” said a voice at her left, causing her to start violently. “Ah, he isn't here; probably he's gone to his fate already. Queer old couple, those parents of his—and he

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doesn't appear in the least ashamed of them, either."

Helen's cheeks tingled, but she restrained herself. She felt that silent contempt was all such a speech deserved. She thought of the kiss she had received from Donald's mother, and of the beautiful, distracted old face of the old man scrambling out of the carriage to help his old wife in. How dare anyone insult such simplicity, and grace? Ashamed of them!

"I actually cried," a foreign voice said somewhere else, "in fact, I was transformed into a fountain. Now, mind, it was *before* the doctor touched me!"

Helen did not join the laugh that followed this quaint confession. She was listening to someone at the other end of the table, who said that in all probability young McGregor would die under the chloroform, and the speaker was one who knew a good deal about it, for he had discovered that the affair was creating quite a sensation amongst the Swiss doctors, and that queer-looking giant of a physician—Duval, or some such outlandish name—who hailed from Lausanne, had come to examine young McGregor last Sunday, and was here again to-day, and he was one of the principal shining lights in the profession. "Dela-doey has the superb impudence to try an experi-

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ment upon a Britisher,” said this patriot, “and if it results fatally (as it’s sure to do), in my opinion a fuss ought to be made. Why can’t they make their infernal experiments upon their own peasantry? McGregor’s nothing but a fool to submit to it.”

“My dear fellow,” put in Mr. Derwent, in his quizzical tone, “what are you raving about? Wait until Deladoey politely requests you to allow him to cut out your heart and lungs—don’t boast beforehand, but let us see you refuse him.”

Helen rose and went quietly away. It was not possible to sit here any longer, listening to these jokes. It seemed as if they were committing a cruelty or a crime against the young, promising life that was in jeopardy.

She went back to the little window in the passage outside her father’s room, and there she kept her watch through the slow hours of that awful day. Once or twice she very gently opened his door to see if all was well with him, and each time found him in the same profound slumber. In the evening, after the last train to Lausanne had left Donverry, she went and sat beside him, in the hush of a new, strange victory. As had been predicted by the Specialist, Mr. Lester awakened late in the evening, and complained of feeling heavy in the head. He meekly accepted the tea

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Helen made for him, and then went to bed without once referring to Lausanne. And so this terrible day came quietly to an end.

There are some days in a human life equal to whole years of agony, but these are its best days, if we only knew it.

CHAPTER VIII—*At the Crossways*

WHILE Helen kept her watch that day at the little passage window overlooking Donvery, Donald had come to the Crossways of his life. Now that the crisis was here, he awaited his fate with a composure that belongs to a stage of consciousness transcending ordinary experience. It rose above the futile grief and resistance of his mother, though he was not unaffected by her piteous distress.

The voices of the doctors could be heard from Donald's room, though fortunately their words were inaudible, for it was not a conversation that would have commended itself to the McGregors.

"You do not hesitate?" repeated Monsieur Duval for the third time.

"Certainly I do not," returned the Specialist, in his briskest style. His eyes were sparkling, his face keen and alert, his hand was steady. He, too, had risen to the occasion, and his colleague watched him with admiration.

"Deladoey," he said, dropping his mighty voice, "you much astonish me—you appear not at

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all concerned, and yet this occasion is great. There is still time—I find myself not in love with this operation, almost I would dis—persuade you from it."

Dr. Deladoey shrugged his shoulders, and exhibited a case of instruments he had ordered from London. Picking out two or three he observed that in all probability they would be useful this morning, and he looked at them affectionately, much as another man might regard his dog.

Monsieur Duval stared at him. He was to do nothing except administer the anæsthetic, yet his hands were shaking like the ague. He could not have extracted a thorn from a child's finger at this moment.

"I will now go and deliver our patient from Monsieur and Madame his parents," said the Specialist. "They have had sufficient time in which to agitate him."

At his brisk entrance old Mrs. McGregor gave way to despair. "He's the only bairn I have," she wailed. "Ah, my laddie, my laddie! I canna let let ye be cut up in cauld blood like this. They shallna do it. Yer fayther ought to prevent it—look at him, he willna say a word, and his ane laddie is bein' murdered this luckless day."

Donald's eyes met the Specialist's.

"He ought to stop this inequity," wildly cried

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the mother, “and there he stands, as dumb as a stone.”

Dr. Deladoey stepped forward and stood in front of Donald, who was sitting in an armchair, robed in his dressing-gown, ready to go to a little theatre at the other end of the passage.

“What for are you agitating so my patient?” asked the doctor. “I have ordered that he shall be kept calm. It is of importance. All is now ready, and I must request him to follow me, so Monsieur and Madame must take leave of their son without too much conversation. I have no time, I am busy—I cannot wait while adieux of length are spoken. Will Monsieur and Madame withdraw at once?”

“Sir,” said old McGregor, turning his white face towards the doctor, and opening his lips at last, “ye neever had an anely son. It’s a great privation, but it may have saved ye the bidding of God-speed that we have to say to-day.”

“Say it without more delay, Monsieur.”

“It’s unco’ soon,” whispered the old man, stumbling as he walked to Donald’s side, “and him no more than thirty. I’d have counted it a favour from the Lord if I could have put my white hairs down in the Kirkyard fust—it’s not the way of nature for the bairns to go before the auld folk. . . . Donald!”

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"Good-bye for the present, father," said Donald, brightly. "No one ever keeps Dr. Deladoey waiting."

"The house is a—braw, muckle house," stammered Donald's father. "Ye must be feckless, my poor lad, and God bless ye on this unchancy cruise."

"I have no time to spare, my time is of value to me," commented the doctor.

The old man laid a shaky hand upon his wife, but she broke loose from it, and flung herself upon her knees before Donald, clinging to him passionately.

"I'll stay with him all through," she cried, "he's me own bairn, and I'd rayther stay with him."

"I cannot allow it, Madame," said Dr. Deladoey. "I entreat you to calm yourself; the occasion requires fortitude. Much depends upon the admirable quietness, tranquillity of my patient, which you are making more difficult. Your son will not suffer; you may leave him in my hands assured that I will do what I can for him."

Again Donald's eyes fell upon those hands—they fascinated him.

"Mother," said he, caressing her hair, "there is not the slightest reason for all this distress. Presently you will be summoned back to come and admire the cure Dr. Deladoey is going to effect,

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and when we go home together to Scotland we'll never stop talking of him with gratitude. Now, just go out a little walk with father, and chat about the days of your courtship, and what a wonderful boy you brought up, and then come in looking as proud as a peacock, and we'll have a talk about old times, and enjoy the evening."

"Come, mither," urged the old man, and she loosed her hold of her son and suffered herself to be led away. The old man turned back at the door to look at Donald as if he were amazed, then, shaking his head, he stumbled away down the passage, and they heard the retreating steps of the poor old parents who were not able to defend their offspring in danger's hour.

"That is over," said the Specialist, in his most businesslike tone. "No doubt it was unpleasant, but at least it was brief. I will feel your pulse so very good, and now, are you ready to come with me? You have a good courage, you are not afraid."

"I trust myself to your wonderful hands, Moosyou."

"That is well. We will now proceed to the day's work, assured that it will be satisfactory."

"But if not, Moosyou?"

"Tut, tut, there is no 'if not' in this case."

"Still, if not—and you must let me say this

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one thing—I want you to send at once for Miss Helen Lester."

"Indeed?" queried the Specialist, raising his eyebrows. "I should myself have imagined that another lady might have been in the thoughts of your mind, but the human mind is an incomprehensible machine."

"I don't understand you, Moosyou."

"There is no time now for explanations of length. We will discuss the matter during your convalescence. The passage is now free, and we may proceed to the theatre."

Donald looked all round the room. He was wondering whether he would ever wake to these surroundings again. Over there, the bed, a wash-stand and small chest of drawers, a table in the centre, and a glass upon the wall. These, with an armchair and one or two others, completed the simple furniture. There was no attempt at adornment, the room reminded one of barracks—there was in it no sign of a woman's presence, but Donald felt a sudden yearning to come back to it, a touch of the homesickness of the soul, which desires with deep longing that which it knows, shrinking from the Unknown instinctively. Then he turned hungrily to the face of the Specialist, but to-day nothing was written there except the expression of a man on the alert.

At the Crossways

"Are you yet ready to proceed?"

"Oh, yes; quite ready."

Donald found himself out in the passage he knew, and for a moment he quailed as he entered the little theatre. There he was greeted by Monsieur Duval, who looked scared, and this nerved him unaccountably. He advanced to shake hands, with a smile.

"Now for the joke," said he.

"The—joke?" stammered Monsieur Duval.

"Yes, Moosyou; don't you know that Moosyou Deladoey's patients regard operations as mighty fun? We think we were born and reared for his entertainment, so here goes!"

Dr. Deladoey gave a few terse directions to a couple of nurses. Then he advanced to the operating table, upon which Donald had placed himself, laughing. Monsieur Duval stood behind, visibly trembling.

"Now," said the Specialist, "you are about to enter upon a pleasant sleep, during which I am to cure you of your disease. It is simple, is it not?"

He motioned to Monsieur Duval, who placed the mask on Donald's face, and for a few moments there was silence. Then Donald heard them talk.

"What time does your train leave Donvery tonight? Yes, I have many cases at this sea-

The Specialist

son; they get less in July, for the English find Donver not high enough—they prefer the mountains. . . . A little more air. . . . Is Lausanne so full?"

Donald found himself wondering how these two could talk upon such trifling subjects while they were driving him out of existence. Each breath he drew increased the velocity of his journey into space. He could hear the sound of wheels, rolling, clattering, rumbling. Faster and faster went those rolling wheels, and presently a voice from a great distance reached his receding consciousness.

"It is an excellent summer resort."

An excellent summer resort—an excellent summer resort. What was the meaning of those words? They bewildered his brain, he could not understand them, they worried him, because he wanted to solve the real problem of his life, to be ready for this stupendous change he felt approaching—but until his brain had answered that stupid question he could not focus his attention upon anything else. He thought he was hurt, that he was a little fellow running to his mother in babyish distress—he could not remember his name, he wondered whether he had ever been anything except a crying child. Now he knew why he heard such a rolling of wheels—he must be in a train.

At the Crossways

' A finger came stealing down upon his pulse; he felt it as if a new sense of touch had suddenly awakened, and Truth itself could be conveyed by Touch. Why should anyone put out a hand in this fast gathering darkness to feel his pulse?

Round and round—now he was himself the wheels, and they were travelling fast. Round and round, and then a sudden cessation. . . .



PART IV

**THE EPISODE OF MADAME
DUROTTY AND THE
SPECIALIST**



CHAPTER I—“*Much Confidence*”

“**W**HAT is the date?”

Helen Lester answered her father’s question the next morning sharply. Exhausted by the strain of the previous day, she had slept heavily all night, and had risen reluctant to begin the baffling struggle of life again. Upon her weary brain was impressed the knowledge that by this time the fate of Donald McGregor was probably sealed, but she had not spirit to dwell upon that subject. Her father’s question roused her.

“The eighteenth, the eighteenth, did you say?
. . . . What became of the seventeenth?”

“Don’t you remember, father? You had an operation yesterday, and were in a stupor after it.”

Mr. Lester stood staring before him.

“You wanted to go to Lausanne on the seventeenth, I know,” said Helen, speaking distinctly and in a tone to rivet his attention, “but after all, you stayed at Donver the whole day. Now that date is over, and you will no longer want to go to Lausanne.”

He glanced at her without stirring his head.

“See what a nice, bright morning it is,” said

The Specialist

Helen, assuming a cheerful tone. "Shall we take a walk together?"

"No."

Helen looked at him and sighed. The idea glanced into her mind that had she not been bound to him by the first tie of nature, he was the sort of man she would have shunned. This thought she smothered before letting it prey upon her. There was something awful in it.

"Helen, you are to go up to the *Maison Blanche* at once."

"What for?"

"To buy a pint of cream."

"Do you wish to give a tea-party?"

"Yes, yes, of course." Mr. Lester tore his watch out of his pocket and studied it. "Make haste, Helen."

"I wonder if they will sell it to-day," said Helen, wearily. The tramp through a hot sun up that particular hill was not desirable. There was no shade all the way.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Lester, sharply.

"It is Sunday."

"Sunday!" he sneered. "Stuff and nonsense; of course they will sell it. Do what I tell you, Helen. How is it that you thwart and irritate me over every little trifle?"

She did not answer, but she put on her hat,

“Much Confidence”

and took a basket in her hand. He watched her off with trembling impatience. The *Maison Blanche* was a well-known dairy some distance from *Donvery*, in the opposite direction.

An hour later Helen returned, hot and tired, and without the cream, which the pious lady at the *Maison Blanche* had stonily declined to sell upon the Sabbath day.

Mr. Lester was not in his room, or in the *Salon*, and she could not find him. Passing the porter in the *bureau*, she asked if he had seen her father go out. Ah, yes, *Mademoiselle* was quite right, *Monsieur Lester* had gone out this morning. He had come first and enquired whether the *Lausanne express* ran upon *Dimanche*, and had then hastened in the direction of the station, having barely time to catch that train, and *Mademoiselle* might be assured that he caught it, as he would have returned by this time otherwise.

Helen stood stock still, as if stunned, and the porter's voice went on and on.

There was no other train to *Lausanne* to-day until the evening, so he hoped that *Monsieur Lester* had not lost it. However, he would have been back by this time, if he had been so unfortunate.

“I will go out,” said Helen, speaking mechanically.

She found herself out again in the blazing sun-

The Specialist

shine. She put her hand to her head, and muttered. Then she turned back to look at the Hotel, and strained to collect her wits. Why was she going out? What did she intend to do? Ah, yes, the station. Of course, she must go to the station.

She hurried, afraid of herself, and a cloud of dust rose under her hurrying feet.

"I am now on the road," she said aloud.

Here was the station at last. It was empty, save for one commissionaire, lolling against the wall, with his hands in his loose blue trouser pockets, and his blouse crumpled up. Yes, the Lausanne express had come as usual, and there was only one passenger from Donvery, an English gentleman, who had been in a hurry. He wore spectacles, and had barely caught the train.

The empty station, the commissionaire in blue, the long stretch of lines, all melted from Helen's sight. Her muscles began to ache, her breath to fail. She stopped herself suddenly, and started arguing.

"I am climbing a hill," she said. "I have been going too fast."

What was this pain?

"I am hungry," she said, and laughed.

Stop—the sun is hot. There is a tree over yonder, and at its foot a bank. The grass is very

“Much Confidence”

long, and flowers bloom in it. How beautiful the shadow of that tree on the hot mountain side!

Helen was down amongst the flowers, and she pressed her face into the cool grass. Now she was still, she could feel the breeze running over her. Presently she slipped over on her back, and her eyes stared up at the pitiless hot sky above her. God? Was it likely that He ruled, indeed, when such things happened in His world?

Her throat was parched, and she was feeling faint. She turned her eyes down from the hard blue sky that mocked her, and a little châlet rose upon her vision. It was not far away, she still had strength to go for human help, and now that the help of God had failed, she felt that was imperative. Some living thing *must* minister to her, or she would go mad. Helen went unsteadily towards the picturesque but dirty little building. At the door stood a Swiss woman, knitting. She wore a ragged skirt, of that peculiar shade of blue impossible to buy in any shop, though every peasant seems to wear it. Her shapely arms were half-covered with white linen sleeves. Her hair was plaited in two long plaits.

“Could I do anything for Mademoiselle?” asked this beautiful peasant, smiling until her dazzling teeth shone in the sunlight.

“Give me a drink of milk,” pleaded Helen. She

The Specialist

sank down on the high doorstep while the woman ran to fetch it. She brought it to her guest in a large bowl, which Helen raised to her lips carefully, holding it with both her trembling hands. When she had taken a deep draught or two of the milk, she asked for bread, and the woman was more delighted than ever. Helen ate a good deal of bread, though it was coarse and sour. Then she offered the woman a franc.

A flush of indignation and hurt pride tinged the peasant's brown cheeks, and she drew back.

"No, no, Mademoiselle, it is worth nothing; Mademoiselle is welcome to all that I have."

Warmed and healed by this simple kindness, Helen impulsively put out her arms and gave the peasant her thanks in an earnest kiss, and the woman turned away to weep, she knew not why.

She heard her guest leave her little, hospitable châlet, and then she ran to her broken gate to watch the retreating figure of the English Mademoiselle who had kissed her. All the English were not like this, but for the sake of one, she was not going to hate the English any longer.

Helen's brain was clearer now, and she knew where she was going. Down below her she could see the white houses of Donvery standing back from the rippling borders of Lake Neuchâtel. She kept a definite purpose in her mind, and at last

“Much Confidence”

felt her aching feet hurt by the cobblestones of Donverys little, narrow streets. Mechanically she picked the way to save herself the worst stones.

This was Dr. Deladoey's house, and now her consciousness came back in full activity.

“I want to see Monsieur Deladoey at once—at once,” she broke out the moment her summons was answered. “Tell him it is urgent,” she said, pushing her way into the hall.

The maid who let her in looked with interest at the young lady's pallid face, and conducted her to a small waiting-room without hesitation. She dared not inquire the cause of this imperative message, but her imagination pictured an awful accident, which she afterwards related as if it had certainly happened.

The Specialist came down promptly.

“Mussioo, Mussioo, my father has gone to Lausanne!”

They stood gazing at each other, the frantic girl and the Specialist. There was a change in him; through all her agitation Helen was aware of it. It was not only that he had been through a sleepless night—that alone could not have left such marks of great exhaustion. His hair appeared whiter, his eye less piercing, there was something almost gentle in his expression. Helen and the Specialist had come to the moment when it was necessary,

The Specialist

that they should understand each other. Neither of them thought of sitting down.

“There is a reason why Monsieur your father should not have gone to Lausanne,” began the doctor. “That something further than the effects of malaria has been affecting Monsieur your father, I have discerned long ago. Have you come to me with much confidence, or with little, Mademoiselle?”

Helen’s eyes read down into the soul of the Specialist.

“I have come with much, this time, Mussioo, with every confidence!”

“Eh bien! Answer my questions. Why has Monsieur departed solitary, leaving his daughter in secrecy?”

“He was afraid that I should in some way prevent him going.”

“Yesterday, Mademoiselle, you feared only that he should depart yesterday. I must be made to understand.”

“In Lausanne,” said Helen, checking a wild desire to sob, and leaning upon the table for support, “is a woman, calling herself Madame Durotty. . . . My father heard of her hypnotic powers, and this idea so preyed upon his mind that at last he insisted upon visiting her. I could not dissuade him. . . . One day I lost him, and

“Much Confidence”

traced him to her. . . .” For one moment she broke down and wept.

“Of what stature is this Madame Durotta?”

“Extremely short, almost a dwarf.”

“Ah!” breathed the Specialist, half chuckling.
“Eh bien?”

“I denounced her to her face, but she only laughed. She gazed into my father’s eyes, and said: ‘On the seventeenth of June you will come back to me; no matter where you are, you will return on the seventeenth’ Oh, Mussioo, I had hoped that, if you cured him of those attacks of fever, his brain would be released from all these fancies. I hoped, I thought, that to tide him safely over the seventeenth was the one chance I had of breaking her evil influence, of rescuing him from—God only knows what awful pitfall!’

“What are your apprehensions, Mademoiselle?”

Helen put out her hands as if pushing away some idea too terrible to be endured, and again she sobbed.

“What that woman wants is money, Mademoiselle; she will do no more to him than despoil him.”

She ceased to sob, and looked eagerly into the doctor’s face.

“You have treated me with much confidence at last, Mademoiselle. You will not repent.”

The Specialist

"Oh, Mussioo, forgive me for ever having failed in confidence!"

He shrugged, and then Helen felt his hand upon her shoulder.

"Much confidence produces much help, mon enfant, and so it is in all the affairs of life—each human being responds to the expectations of his fellows. This is a rule by which we may safely guide our conduct. . . . You will now give me the address of this Madame who calls herself Durotto. I am even this evening hastening down to Lausanne on a matter of importance. I may at the same time call upon this Madame."

"Mussioo, I will come with you."

"Not so, Mademoiselle. That which I have to do requires your absence rather than your presence. Mademoiselle will, on the contrary, retire to her couch and there rest until the return of her father. Some trouble might have been avoided had Mademoiselle reposed in me much confidence yesterday rather than to-day, but you have a proverb which expresses that it is better than never if you are unpunctual."

He patted her shoulder gently, and pushed her towards the door. When Helen turned to thank him, he laughed and waved her away—his time was of value. . . .

CHAPTER II—*Concerning Electricity*

IMMEDIATELY after Donald's operation, Monsieur Duval of Lausanne had returned home. His share in the crime was over, he deserted his friend rather than witness the natural consequence of their guilt. He passed a night of remorse, for the great fellow had a very tender conscience, and he felt himself to blame for the surgical murder at which he had assisted. For no one else on earth would he have consented thus to sell his innocence, but it was not possible to refuse Deladoey!

It was a shock to him to hear on Sunday evening that Monsieur Deladoey was downstairs, waiting to see him. He scrambled out of his capacious armchair, where he was striving to quiet his troublesome conscience by reading philosophy, and shuffled downstairs in a hurry.

"So he has succumbed? Ah, you need not tell me. The only thing that surprised me was that he breathed still when we carried him back to bed. I warned you—I knew that such an operation was impossible; no one but yourself would

The Specialist

have conceived an idea so daring and so fatal. But, mon ami, surgical enthusiasm must be bounded by limits, and if operations must be performed—there are the animals.” . . . His voice dropped. Monsieur Duval had been educated in Paris.

“You yourself pronounced the case incurable,” answered Dr. Deladoey, waving aside that last suggestion as if it were intensely distasteful to him. “And it was upon those grounds that you acknowledged this attempt legitimate. Was it not so?”

“Yes, yes,” groaned his colleague.

“You were quite sure that there was but one termination to his malady, apart from any operation.”

“It was advanced beyond medical assistance,” admitted the physician, and groaned again. “Ah, I wish that young man of promise and admirable courage had come to me a year ago—or even six months. We should then have seen the triumph of medicine over surgery.”

Once again Dr. Deladoey waved aside this digression, and brought his professional brother back to the main point.

“You are convinced that he was incurable, since he allowed his malady to advance so far before applying for assistance against it?”

Concerning Electricity

"Ah, yes, that is so, but men are foolish."

"Therefore it is wrong to accuse me of murder. I but made one last, desperate attempt to save a dying man."

"No one shall accuse you of murder," shouted Monsieur Duval, laying his enormous hand on his friend's shoulder. "The fellow was dying in any case, and you have my testimony to uphold you. But yet," said he, shuddering and drawing back, "in my opinion it *was* murder."

"What if the operation had succeeded?" asked Dr. Deladoey, after a short pause.

"Then," said his friend, with a regretful shake of his head, "you would have made your fame, mon ami. . . . What time did he die?"

"He is not dead," said the Specialist, quietly. Then, meeting the incredulous stare of his friend, he added: "Monsieur McGregor is not going to die. He will recover." . . .

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From the most triumphant moment of his life, the Specialist passed on without agitation to another business which led him down into the unwholesome bye-ways of Lausanne. At an unpretentious doorway he stopped, and when his knock was answered, assumed an air foreign to his character. In a whisper he breathed a request

The Specialist

for an interview with the celebrated Madame Durotty, and the attendant who let him in grinned from ear to ear the moment he had closed the door of the room where Madame Durotty met her clients.

The air was heavy with the scent of lilies of the valley. Dr. Deladoey sniffed once or twice, and looked disgusted. It was not good to live in such an atmosphere, however sweet, so he got up and flung the window open, letting in a counter-smell that certainly was not sweet.

Somebody, entering, and peering into the dusky room, which was not yet lighted up, though the hour was late, uttered an exclamation of dismay, and then the doctor smiled. He wheeled round and bowed low to the dwarfish figure before him, but there was ill-concealed mockery in his salutation. The woman stared at him out of great, restless, startled eyes.

“A little fresh air of Lausanne will be beneficial, Madame,” said the Specialist, “that so one may not be stupefied in your presence. I had an idea—a sort of idea—that in Madame Durotty I should discover my friend of old—Madame Emery. That which I have heard of Madame Durotty resembles her.”

The woman shuddered, and tried to escape his eyes. But there was no escape from Dr. Dela-

Concerning Electricity

doey, and on occasions he knew no mercy. Ah, if only she had guessed who was here to see her before she fell into his snare!

“It must always be a pleasure to a man who understands a little of electricity to meet with one who has discovered new virtues in the marvellous force, especially when he has once before learned of the fair discoverer a little occult magnetism through her guidance.”

The woman dropped into a chair and cowered.

“It may become my duty to expose the new electricity, as I did the magnetised rods with which Madame Emery cured so many diseases.”

“But I cure no one now,” burst out the cowering creature. “I in no wise interfere with Monsieur’s profession. I but give the public that for which it cries. It is my way to earn a living. Those who want excitement, I excite. Those who want amusement, I attempt to amuse.”

“So it is to amuse them that you play upon the strong imagination and feeble will of fools, or is it to excite them? Ah, yes, it certainly is amusing,airy amusing, to fill your pockets with their amusing money.”

“Monsieur,” protested his victim, in the tone of one who pleads, “I have demonstrated—that which you will not believe—that I possess the hypnotic power. Monsieur, I do. I am myself ignor-

The Specialist

ant of its nature, but I can even lock a patient. The thing is proved to me, myself."

"And also to your patient, Monsieur Lester."

She started violently.

"Yes—you see, I do not come to you knowing nothing. But, unfortunately, Monsieur Lester is also my patient, Madame. I am not in the habit of sharing my patients with others not chosen by myself to act in concert with me. You locked him, as you call it, for the seventeenth, but he did not come until the eighteenth, to-day. Can you explain this inconsistency?"

She would not, or perhaps could not.

"It may be necessary for me to explain the phenomenon to you, and in a way you may not enjoy. You will first confess how much money you extorted from him for this way in which you have amused him?"

"Nothing—a poor little fee of five francs."

He came a step nearer, and his eyes shone like two points of light out of the gathering darkness.

"Fifty francs," gasped the woman, "that is the truth—not another centime."

"Madame, I have a small advice to offer you, and that is, that you tell me the truth."

"Five hundred, on my soul! Mon Dieu, five thousand!"

Concerning Electricity

“Show me the cheque.”

“A million!” shrieked the woman. . . . “Are you *le diable*?”

“It is quite possible. Give me the cheque, Madame—at once. It is my advice that you keep me waiting not too long.”

It seemed that Madame’s hypnotic power was now transferred to the Specialist, for the wretched little woman answered to his will as one in a trance. She moved to her desk, and took from it a box, inside of which was a smaller box. It required time to turn so many keys, to the accompaniment of uncontrolled sobs and tears. She uttered a piercing wail as she at last handed the doctor Mr. Lester’s fortune. A few strokes of the pen had transferred it from his keeping to hers.

“Now, bring here at once Monsieur Lester, my patient.”

“He has gone. I cannot.”

“Then will him here again.”

She writhed under the scorn of his tone.

“Monsieur, Monsieur, you know that is impossible.”

“So the new electricity is impotent? Nevertheless, I will be obeyed. Bring Monsieur Lester to me at once—go!”

The woman took her bonnet with shaking hands. A palsy seemed to have seized her. She

The Specialist

stood there hesitating, and glancing wildly round the room.

“You shall take nothing with you, and you shall not return without him. It is no use, Madame, attempting to escape me by flight. I shall not accompany you, but you will either bring Monsieur Lester here at once, or you will yourself be brought back to me in a way you might possibly dislike. Now go.”

With a sob she obeyed his imperative finger, pointing to the door. The terror of his superior will was upon her—if she had never believed in hypnotism before she had cause to recognise the power at last. Outside she saw a gendarme. He did not appear to notice her, but his presence provided her with speed, and the doctor had no longer to wait than he expected. In a very short time Madame Durotty returned, ushering in the sorry figure of his patient and hers. Dr. Deladoey had lighted up preparatory to this interview, and the lamplight fell upon a haggard, ghastly face, the face of a man whose spirit is broken with his fortunes.

“Sit down, Monsieur,” said the doctor, placing a chair for this trembling wreck of a man. “Madame’s séance is not yet complete. Stand forward, Madame— (Durotty, is that what you now call yourself?). Acknowledge to this gentleman how

Concerning Electricity

much hypnotism, or electricity, or whatever you have designated your new abilities, you have used to reduce him to beggary. I have still a little advice to offer you, Madame, which is that you make a true confession."

Mr. Lester gazed from one to the other, scared and bewildered, and Madame Durotty wept copiously.

"Be quick, Madame; my time is of value to me."

"All my power," she wailed, "resides in the imaginations of my subjects. I have none—no, none—save that which lurks in their fancies. I do but suggest to them, and they, they themselves do all the rest. They imagine, when they come to me, that I have this power—and the effect is the same as if I had it in reality and truth." This she concluded with a faint approach to defiance.

"You hear her," said the doctor. "You have allowed yourself to be tricked and duped by this foolish woman. You have signed away your fortune to her, and left your daughter penniless."

Mr. Lester hung his head and groaned.

"It comes upon me, Monsieur Lester, that you have shown yourself not worthy of Mademoiselle your daughter. It is for her sake that I have taken so much of trouble to come to this Madame Durotty, who is scarcely worth the wasting of my time in her exposure, and for her sake that I de-

The Specialist

stroy this iniquitous cheque, thus restoring to you the fortune you appear incapable of managing."

Mr. Lester stared and drew himself together. The ghastly look left his features, his eyes stared devouringly at the cheque. Dr. Deladoey made him absolutely satisfied that this was indeed his cheque, and then took it in the tongs and set fire to it over the lamp. Not one of them stirred until the paper was reduced to ashes.

"Now we will repair to the station. We can still catch the ten o'clock train back to Donvery, and my last advice to Madame here is that she vacates Lausanne without delay. It is the second time that I have so advised her—I hope, I trust, for her sake, that I shall not have to repeat this counsel for the third time. Switzerland is not a large enough country for this Madame of the changeable name and myself."

• • • • •

"Missyer," faltered Mr. Lester, holding on to his arm while they went down the street, "I can never, never thank you What must you think of me?"

"That you are a fool, my friend," cheerfully answered the Specialist.

PART V
THE END OF THE SEASON

CHAPTER I—*This my Son was Dead and is Alive Again*

OLD McGREGOR stood at the end of the bed, staring at his son. He stood and stared, mumbling with his lips.

The invalid suddenly opened his eyes.

“They told me ye were better, Donald—ye don’t look it, lad.”

“Looks are deceptive,” answered Donald, rousing himself.

The old man ventured timidly round to the side of the bed. He put out his hand and laid it on his son’s.

“Donald, we’ve not ben far from losing of ye, and now, though they tell me the same, and ye don’t look it, I’d like to hear ye say yerself that ye’re better.”

“Much better,” returned the invalid, with impressive vigour. “In next to no time we’ll all be going home together.”

“Aye, aye, that is my prayer.”

“Aren’t you comfortable in Donvery?”

“Oh, aye, but it ain’t like home. The beds have got the flimsiest curtains ever I saw, not a bit of good for keeping out the draught.”

The Specialist

“Mosquito nets,” suggested Donald, smiling.

“It’s mighty queer their ways in foreign parts. They give ye a roll of bread without any inside to it, and a cup of *coffee-au-lait*, as they call it, and expect ye to mak’ a breakfast of it. No wonder ye’re thin, my lad. I’m looking forrad to bringing of ye home, to feed ye up with a man’s victuals. . . . And you, Donald, you’ll marry a bonny lassie some day, will ye not? You willna let our branch dee out?”

Donald did not answer. He had a sudden vision of little May Tempest.

“I’d like to see somethin’ bright and young about the old place, Donald. It’s the last wish of my heart to see ye settled there, with yer ain wife and bairns. It ain’t natural for a young man to be alone. Ye’ll think of gittin’ married, won’t ye, lad?”

“Of course I will,” answered Donald.

The old man watched him with huge delight, and Donald fell into a doze. In these days he did little except sleep and eat; all the other problems of life were still too far away from reality to be worth considering. It was enough to know that he still existed.

The old man bent over him, and gently pulled the douvet up a little closer round the slumberer.

“Oh, Lord God!” muttered old McGregor, and

This my Son was Dead and is Alive Again

looked round reproachfully. Then he pointed at Donald, showing him to the Lord, and said, "My son!"

A bright, promising ray of light streamed through the open window, and old McGregor hung his head. He felt that he had been wrong to reproach the Lord, Who had raised his son to life again. He would never offend like this again—and Donald had promised him to marry—he might still see his posterity to the second generation, and then he'd be content to fill his niche in the family vault.

Out of these pleasing reflections he was roused by the entrance of his enemy, the Specialist, whom the old man hated with his whole heart. Accordingly, he retired at once, and Donald opened his eyes and laughed.

"He cannot forgive you, Moosyou, for having performed the miracle of healing me."

Dr. Deladoey chuckled.

"You must never expect him to acknowledge that you saved my life."

"That matters nothing to me," answered the Specialist, feeling Donald's pulse. "To-morrow you may return to the Hotel; you are not now sufficiently ill to occupy this room in my hospital."

"You seem anxious to be rid of me, Moosyou."

"That is so. Having set the machine in order,

The Specialist

I pack it up and send it away. That is my life. I have no time for the sentiments; they would destroy me if I indulged them. There are reasons why it is important that you should return at once to the Hotel."

"You require this room for another patient, I suppose," said Donald, almost resentfully.

Dr. Deladoey eyed him askance.

"You will find the same company at the Hotel which you left there when you came to me for this operation, but the season is far advanced, and many of the visitors to Donvery are about to depart."

"Oh!" exclaimed Donald, raising himself. "Can you tell me which of them? Are the Doppings going yet?"

Dr. Deladoey shrugged his shoulders and sneered.

"Monsieur Dopping remains longer than the others. . . . I have no time for staying here to discuss my every patient. You will return to-morrow, and can then discover for yourself all the movements of your friends. They have had much anxiety on your account."

Donald lay back and dreamed. The vision of bright blue eyes and curling hair persisted. He thought he saw little May Tempest running about that dull old home in Scotland. . . .

CHAPTER II—*On His Return*

HERE stood the fine old trees, unchanged, though Donald had gone through an experience so stupendous. It was wonderful to be thus returning back to life, and he walked slowly towards the old pleasant shade, weak and feeble still, but with a new spring of health rising within him. Dr. Deladoey had sent him back to the Hotel, and had implied that it was urgent for him to return at once to it. There was significance in his urgency. And Donald felt himself in the spirit of expectancy, ready to accept whatever happened in a manner most significant.

And May Tempest came tripping out of an open door.

He fixed his eyes upon the girl, coming towards him in the sunlight. She seemed a figure in a dream—it was prophetic that she, the embodiment of life and youth, should be the first to greet him on his return. It was Helen to bid him God-speed when he went to death, but May to welcome him back to life.

When he saw how the sunlight sought her hair,

The Specialist

how it rippled amongst her curls, and sparkled in her dancing eyes, how it glowed in her cheeks, dimpled by nature like the face of a baby, and caressed the naughty, merry, pouting lips—his heart went after his eyes.

“Are you cured, Mr. McGregor? I thought you were dead. I never heard a word about you since you went away.”

Donald felt a little pang. Dr. Deladoey had told him that his friends had had much anxiety on his account!

“Yes, I am all right now.”

“I want to know something, Mr. McGregor—and I am so glad you are here to help me in my dilemma. You have come back just when I want you.”

“Well?” Donald smiled encouragement into her wide open eyes, and May obeyed his inviting motion by taking a seat beside him.

“Does an Englishwoman have to marry a Frenchman if he asks her?”

“Why should she?” asked Donald, puzzled to understand the drift of this.

“It is a question of International Law,” answered May, proud of this period, which she rolled out impressively. “Mr. Derwent said there might be a war about it. I did not believe him, of course, but I was drawn with Gustave Foucou

On His Return

at the tennis tournament, and Mr. Derwent said it was a Sign."

"So they are going to marry you to Gustave Foucou?" asked Donald, with sudden jealousy. Then he remembered Mr. Crabbe, and was startled. Not for long would this bright child wander about the world as free as the sunshine she embodied.

"Mr. Derwent says I've got to. He said it was the Law. . . . How am I to get rid of Gustave?" asked May, moving a little nearer to Donald, and once again laying her hand upon his knee, while the blue eyes searched his face earnestly, even imploringly. "I do hate him so."

There were certainly tears gathering in those sunny eyes.

"It isn't true—that about international law, is it, Mr. McGregor?"

"No," said Donald, angrily.

"Gustave is all the while following me about, and saying, 'I'm going to marry you,' and he only laughs when I say he shan't. Mr. Derwent will persist that the French have different customs to the English, and that their girls have nothing whatever to say to their marriages, and it is doubly binding when a Frenchman falls in love with an Englishwoman, for no English father dare refuse to give his daughter to a Frenchman. I—

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I knew it couldn't be true. . . . But I do wish I knew how to get rid of that horrid Gustave."

"There is a way," said Donald, in a low voice, and now, with rapidly beating pulses, his hand stole down protectingly over hers, that still lay there, inviting him, upon his knee.

"What way? Oh, do tell me, you are always so nice and kind, and I am quite certain that *you* wouldn't go and tell me an untruth." The pretty rosebud lips were quivering, dangerously near his own.

"By consenting to marry another man."

"Which man?" asked May, with a gleam of hope.

There was a pause before he answered. The most absolute innocence gazed at him out of those childlike eyes.

"Me," whispered Donald.

"Do you mean it? Do you really mean it?" Now the light came rippling over the child's face.

"I never say what I do not mean."

The girl clapped her hands. "What a good way, Mr. McGregor; I do think you are clever."

CHAPTER III—*The Memorial Stone*

THE day of Donald's return was the last day the Lesters had to spend at Donvery, and Helen had come out into the grounds to revisit every spot made sacred to her memory by the scenes and conversations she and Donald had enjoyed together. She had no idea that she would meet him, and when her eyes fell upon him, with the glow of happiness and returning health in his face, the world seemed to stand still a moment for Helen.

He sprang up and came hurrying towards her. What a welcome shone through his eyes and in his extended hand!

"This truly is good fortune for me—you are only the second person I have met on my return to life."

Helen would have wished to be the first, but in the joy of meeting him so unexpectedly, she had enough happiness.

"I had no idea that I should see you," she heard herself exclaiming, "though, as you may fancy, I have frequently heard of your rapid progress back to health."

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"It is wonderful to be restored," he answered, "and to have a career before me. That career," he said, "has been carved out by you. It will be along very different lines now, and whatever success I may achieve in it, I shall owe to your inspiration—this very life of mine seems like a gift from you. . . . It is not every man, Miss Lester, who has the good fortune of a friend like you."

Helen did not answer. Her pulses leaped. It seemed to her that the supreme moment of her life had come. And so it had, but it was not the moment she imagined.

"I should like my friend to be the first to wish me joy," said Donald, dropping his voice to a tone so tender that Helen thought she had never before known what the human voice was capable of expressing.

She stood quietly before him, and the self-control of all her life was what kept her calm through that which followed. Men and women do not learn that lesson in an hour.

"I am engaged to be married," he said, still more softly.

The leaves waved overhead, there was a gentle lowing of oxen in the distance. The sunlight was so bright that it seemed to rise from the ground in fumes.

The Memorial Stone

“You have not told me her name,” said Helen, leaning back against a tree. There was no other outer sign of the supreme shock she had received.

“Her name is May.”

“May,” repeated Helen, and smiled. “That is a sweet and lovely name.”

“I see you have not guessed, Miss Lester—but you know her—she, too, has come to me from the calamity that drove me here, and that has proved my best of fortunes. . . . May,” he said, dwelling tenderly upon the name, “May Tempest, little May—coming to me *so young*.”

Helen did not start, her utter consternation was invisible.

“Yes, she has promised to be my wife,” he said, as if the marvel of such happiness were almost beyond human comprehension. His voice vibrated with the depth of feeling. “Miss Lester, be the first to wish me joy.”

“I do that, from my very soul.”

“And from mine, I thank you for such a wish. I am glad that you have been the first to hear the news, that I take as the best of omens. Miss Lester—you will excuse me if I hurry from you now? I—I am going to—*her*!” With that he smiled eagerly into those good, inspiring eyes, feeling himself already blessed and strengthened.

Helen stood perfectly still where he had left

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her, leaning against the tree. No one went by but the Circulator, who hurried when he saw her. He was like a man with a guilty conscience. She smiled at him, and the smile did not leave her lips till long after he was out of sight—she had forgotten that she was smiling.

At last she looked all round, and in stirring the colour ebbed out of her cheeks. She kept her hand against the bark of the tree until she was balanced securely on her feet. Then she walked steadily till she came to the gate that opened on the road to the Beer Garden.

The day was hot and dry. That long, winding road, where there was so little shade at this hour, lay dazzling white in the sunshine. One could see clouds of dust rising here and there, but there was not enough wind to support them, and they fell where they rose. No one was likely to venture in this direction on such a day. Helen closed the gate carefully—there might be straying cattle loose, which would frighten the invalids if they came upon them suddenly in the grounds. She thought of the invalids with tenderness and pity; their sufferings seemed to Helen very terrible; it hurt her to picture such pain.

Her eyes were fixed steadily in front of her, and for all the glare she did not blink them. She did not see the outlines of the mountains, or the

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flowers that spangled the grass, or the lizards basking in the heat, too lazy to run away. Round her was painted in vivid colours the beauty of this valley, but she did not know it. All her attention was concentrated in hurrying towards a spot she knew. She made straight for a certain tree, a certain stone. It was the spot she had named her own in all the world. She was glad to sit upon the stone—her stone now. She was glad to be alone.

Alone—for she was condemned to absolute solitude of spirit for the rest of her life. She had come here to say good-bye; it would not do ever to come here again.

She said to herself that it was well this had happened to-day, for it had spared her all the sickening anxieties of hope deferred, all the hideous watching for tidings or a sign, that would have been hers had she gone back to England in ignorance, expecting daily some signal from the man she loved. Then, with a shudder, it swept over her that she would rather have all that anguish of uncertainty instead of this dead blank of knowledge! There would have been some interest in her life even in that everlasting doubt, she could still have consoled herself with prayer—we turn instinctively to the Power that rules our lives when action is taken out of our hands.

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It was too late now, there was no longer even that possibility for Helen. She could not any longer wildly offer up a prayer, thrusting before the Almighty His written promises, and demand that they should be fulfilled. She was robbed even of that.

“Little May—coming to me *so young*.” The words returned suddenly to her memory. Ah, that was it! He had chosen May because she was *so young*. “And I—I am thirty-five,” gasped Helen, and remembered how she had told him so in one of their early talks. He had seemed surprised, and his manner had somewhat altered, treating her more as his equal on account of her superior age. Then it flashed into her mind that most men prefer for their life-partnership to join themselves to *an inferior*. Her mistake had been in thinking Donald was above that weakness, that he would seek rather for a perfect comradeship in mind than for a wife who would be his plaything and his pet.

Helen’s hand stole into her bosom and drew out a little parcel. She had no right now to possess a souvenir of so significant a character; it was not fair to that other girl—to May. She gently unwrapped the pen he had given her from its shroud of tissue paper. A flood of tears blinded her eyes, but she drove them back. “I will not keep it,” she

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said, aloud; "it would become sin to me." Then she cast about in her mind how she could part with such a gift, and she knew that to yield it up to any other person in this world would be impossible. She must, therefore, dispossess herself of it by other means.

The best way would be to bury it—and where could she more appropriately make its grave than here, where the life she ended to-day had begun? She knelt down and scooped out a grave at the foot of Donald's stone and hers. Into this she laid his pen, and pressed back the earth carefully, so that it should not look disturbed. This stone, Donald's and hers, would do for a memorial. It was right that this particular stone should mark a grave.

Helen was very, very tired. She would have liked to stay here, and never move again. Life was too full of agony to be borne. It was presided over by a God Who mocks us, Who sends to each one of us whatever hurts that one most. So she thought, going through her bitter disappointment.

She looked far away into the world, and everywhere she seemed to see living creatures in pairs and companies. And she was glad that the animals are not alone. It is not natural for anything that lives; each one requires its mate. After all,

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she was an animal, she was nothing better than a creature whose instincts demand this mate.

It was an hour of deep humiliation, when she saw how utterly her philosophy had failed. There seemed to Helen now no interest in life, because she had allowed all her thoughts to centre upon one hope, and that hope had disappeared, had failed.

She was roused from the inaction of despair by the sound of far-distant voices. This was a fête day at the Beer Garden, and presently a noisy band of peasants would come down the road; they might possibly insult her. She must go before she was found here alone by that troop of drunken men. The moment had come to say Good-bye—that beautiful word which we have made so sad.

Helen looked round once more, for the last time.

And now she was on her way homewards. She went slowly, for it is with reluctance that we turn our back upon our youth, and the great empty future of her life looked grey and cold and colourless to Helen. As she went, a chaffinch suddenly broke into song.

CHAPTER IV—*A Rose That Had a Thorn*

THE Hotel omnibus was returning from the station with a flourish. As it was empty, it had evidently been employed in carrying visitors away.

“Who has just gone?” asked Donald. He and the proprietor of the Hotel were chatting together in the porch.

“Monsieur et Mademoiselle Lester.”

“What?”

The proprietor, waxing loquacious, began to enumerate the number of patients who had been sent away cured this summer. He seemed to think it was due to the virtues of the sulphur rather than to Dr. Deladoey, though he allowed that Monsieur the doctor was becoming quite celebrated, and that there was to be a meeting of all the Swiss doctors in the canton to discuss some special case of the Specialist’s, but he did not know what case, only he supposed it must be one of the town patients, as he would surely have been informed had it been one of his guests here at the Hotel. With that he glowered suspiciously at Donald, and

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informed no more. Donald had not once replied to him.

The young man stepped out into the grounds, mentally stunned. It had not seemed possible to him that Helen should ever pass out of his life, but she had done this, and had not even come to say good-bye. She had been on the eve of departure only yesterday afternoon when he had met her in the grounds, and she had not told him she was going—and she had gone! Helen Lester had gone!

Ah, here was May, come out to gather roses. She was stretching up her arms to secure one out of reach. Her lips were parted, her cheeks flushed, and the wind lifted a little curl and blew it across her cheeks. She jumped up lightly, and the prize was hers. Donald strode forward and caught the hand that held the rose, lifting it to his face that he might enjoy its fragrance first.

May pulled away her hand, frowning.

"You've pricked me," she said, throwing down the rose, while she tucked her thumb into her mouth and sucked it.

He bent down to secure the flower for himself, fixing it into his buttonhole.

"An emblem of you," he said.

"Do you mean the rose, or the thorn?" asked May, sulkily. She rolled her handkerchief round

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the wounded thumb. "I know my finger will fester, for there's a thorn in it, and I dare not have it taken out. How stupid of you—and you're not a bit sorry, either."

"I am," he returned. "Let me see the finger; I will get the thorn out for you."

"Indeed you shall not," smartly rejoined his bride-elect, "you shall not touch it. I wish you wouldn't come following me about everywhere, just like Gustave and that odious Mr. Crabbe. However, *he's* gone. I got rid of *him*." Now she began to smile and look roguish.

Donald stood and looked at her with a startled expression.

"You never used to come worrying after me all day long, Mr. McGregor, and I don't like it."

"May, do you know you have promised to marry me? Are not people about to be married generally rather—fond—of being together?"

"What are you talking about?" she exclaimed. "To hear you, one would think that we were going to be married to-morrow! However, I have something else to think about. I don't intend to be married for years. What's the matter now?"

"I am surprised, that's all. Generally people get engaged with some idea of marrying before long."

"Well, *I* didn't, anyhow—dear me, what can

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you be thinking about?" She broke into a rippling laugh. Donald's idea appeared to her so funny.

Old McGregor at this moment stumbled upon them, and was for beating a retreat, but his son would not let him go. He was afraid of being alone with May; he was staggered by a horrible fear.

"Come with me to see the auld mither, my bonny bairn," said the old man, tenderly. "She's sitting in the Salong, wishing for a sight of ye. She's that pleased I cannot tell ye, to think as our lad's got his ain lassie at last."

May laughed again, and willingly enough went with the old man. It was without doubt great fun to her. Donald followed steadily.

"Here she is!" cried the old man, presenting May to his wife triumphantly. "She's come to see ye."

"And it's right welcome she is, too," said Donald's mother, holding out both her hands to May. "Come an' see me, my pretty; I want to ken the looks of ye. . . . There, I've droppit my knittin', but doubtless ye'll be able to pick up the lost stitches; those bright eyen can see to do it better nor my auld anes."

"I don't know anything about knitting," laughed May. "I don't see the use of it when you can buy so much nicer stockings ready made."

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Donald stood and watched, with folded arms.

Mrs. McGregor protested in rather excited tones that hand-knitting is much better than the work done by those new-fangled machines, which had not been so much as invented when she was a girl.

"Oh, there are lots of improvements since you were a girl."

"The auld ways be the best ways," quavered the old woman. She was hurt.

"And when shall we have the welcoming of ye to the auld hame?" asked old McGregor, touching May playfully and half reverentially. "I'm looking to the day when Donald brings his bride to bonny Scotland, and it's a fine welcome ye'll have, too; we'll bring out Colin to play the bagpipes and dance a hornpipe for ye."

"The bagpipes!" cried May. "I do hope you won't, Mr. McGregor. I can't endure the horrid things."

"Not like the bagpipes?" exclaimed the old man.

"Well, I should think not," returned May, merrily, "because, you see, I do like music. But it doesn't matter—I'm not going to live in Scotland—no, thank you." The idea tickled her immensely.

"Not live in Scotland!" gasped the old lady,

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staring from May to Donald. "A McGregor not live in Scotland when he's settled!"

"She doesn't mean it," said Donald.

"I do," cried May, indignantly. "Why, I'd rather die than live in that stupid country where you do nothing but play the bagpipes and keep the Sabbath."

"Mither, will ye come down by the burn?"

Donald watched them go.

CHAPTER V—*The Principal Part of
the Marriage Ceremony*

M R. DERWENT strolled out into the garden. One would think he had too much time on his hands, but the Hotel omnibus was even now waiting for him at the door. The idea of mentioning his departure to his friends had only just occurred to him, in spite of an opportunity he had had last night, when he had sat in the conservatoire with Miss Dopping. They had not spoken much, but the little deaf lady had never been so happy in her life. Her eyes had been pierced by his looks—that surely said more than tongue could speak. Her nerves had been thrilled by his touches—accidental, of course. And thus they had enjoyed the evening, every moment drawing nearer to the Brink . . . but never absolutely reaching it.

Now Miss Dopping was out in the garden with her brother Edward, and May was kneeling in the grass at a little distance.

“Am I to congratulate you?” said Edward, softly, speaking into his sister’s ear.

She raised her eyes to his, quivering with emo-

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tion, and blushing like a rose. She made a little gesture of embarrassed delight, shaking her head deprecatingly.

“Oh, no, dear Edward, you, you really must not. I cannot think what you mean.”

“It will be funny, eh?—on the same day that I have this same duty to perform towards—her.” He indicated May with a gesture, and that young lady by an almost imperceptible movement indicated that she was listening to something. Perhaps it was only to the birds.

“Hulloa! there you are.”

Edward Dopping and his sister involuntarily stood up. Some one was coming towards them. Never in her life before had Miss Alice Dopping crimsoned so beautifully as she did now. She was meeting *him* for the first time since that wonderful hour in the conservatoire.

“I am so glad to see you,” said Mr. Derwent, politely throwing away the end of a cigar, but glancing at the smouldering stump with regret. “I should have been quite sorry to leave Donvery without saying good-bye to you and Miss May. Don’t you hear my dolorous lament, Miss May? Why don’t you come and shed tears over my departure? Eh? Don’t you hear me?”

“No, I don’t,” rang back the girl’s clear voice from the grass.

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“May!” sternly spoke her uncle.

“What? Please don’t interrupt me. I’m sorting my flowers.”

“And I’m going away,” said Mr. Derwent.

“Are you? When?”

“Now, this very moment. I am only waiting until one most cruel will deign to distract her attention from her flowers to wish me a farewell.”

“Oh,” said May, “if wishing you farewell will get ri’ will do, I’ll come at once. Good-bye—good-bye. But I cannot shake hands, because of my gathered thumb.”

“Good-bye,” returned Mr. Derwent, ostentatiously drawing forth his handkerchief. “Good-bye,” he repeated, cheerfully, bowing over Miss Dopping’s hand. Then he looked straight into her startled eyes, and said, with significance, “*until next year.*”

No warm blush suffused her cheeks this time; they were pallid. Not a single word issued out of her ashen lips. As the American turned and strolled off again, she gave a little start, and suddenly sped away in another direction. She knew a spot from which one could watch the omnibus for half a mile along the road to the station.

The romance of life was over for the little lady —until the omnibus was out of sight, when sud-

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denly she raised her head and whispered, "He said, 'until next year.' "

"May," said Edward Dopping, detaining his niece, who wanted to get back to her flowers, "I wish to have a serious talk with you."

"About my thumb?" queried May. "It seems to be causing a good deal of consternation in the Hotel. But I won't have it lanced unless Dr. Deladoey gives me chloroform. It was that stupid Donald McGregor who did it."

"It is about Donald I wish to speak to you. I stand to you in the position of a father, while you remain under my care. Are you attending?"

"Yes—I'm never doing anything else," and she sighed.

"It respects the married life. I am greatly pleased with your engagement, and have written to your father to tell him so. I begin by giving my hearty approval to the match."

May looked disconcerted; for once she was taken by surprise, and stared straight at her uncle in a sort of amazement.

"He is a quiet, sensible young man, considerably older than you, and without doubt will soon bring you to order. You have been scandalously spoilt by your foolishly indulgent father, but you will find married life a great corrective. A wife has

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to obey—her solemn vow to do so is the principal part of the marriage ceremony.”

He stopped. With defiant head upraised, May was stalking away down the garden path. The moment of her rebellion had come.

CHAPTER VI—*Jilted*

“**H**ERE you are *again*,” was May’s cross exclamation upon meeting Donald immediately after the scene with her uncle.

“Yes, I have been looking for you.”

“What do you want?” Her tone was sharp, the blue eyes had a dangerous look.

Donald stood before her, stern and gloomy.

“You forget, May—we are engaged.”

“We are nothing of the kind. I am never going to marry you.”

He stood steady against the shock. His pulses rang in his ears. Only yesterday they had become engaged!

“Do you know what you are saying?”

“Yes, I do; I always know what I am saying.”

“Am I to understand by this that you—you have changed your mind as regards our engagement?”

“Yes, of course.”

“So the fun’s over,” said Donald.

“Now I begin to like you again,” said May.

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“You are sensible. It certainly was rather amusing; but the best part of an engagement is that it can be broken off so easily, can’t it?”

“Oh, yes, nothing easier. Why, it’s simplicity itself.”

May laughed up at Donald, quite expecting an answering smile, and was astonished because he made no response to her gaiety.

“I’ll go straight off and tell Uncle Edward that we’ve decided to jilt each other,” she cried, merrily. “No, I’ll tell him that I’ve jilted you. Oh, won’t it be fun to see his face!” Then, still finding no sympathy in her fiancé’s morose expression, she pulled a little grimace, and darted away, eager to impart the amusing intelligence to her uncle.

And Donald walked slowly on. With Helen’s departure all his luck had oozed away. Somehow or other he had made a complete mess of his life. Now one clear thought after another chased itself across his awakening mind. Things the Specialist had said to him, vague before, now became plain. He had let Helen go—to be jilted by May!

Here was his dear old father, looking the picture of dejection. He must tell him at once—something suggested to Donald that the news would not break his father’s heart.

“I’ve just had a little talk with May, father.”

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“Aye, aye,” muttered the old man. “She’s bonny enough, anyhow.” He wanted to make an excuse for his son. “Ye’ve chosen a bonny bit lassie, my lad. The Lord grant as ye may be right down happy together.”

“The Lord didn’t think we should, father, so He interfered on your behalf and had your son jilted the day after he became engaged.”

“Do ye mean as ye’re betrothed to her no longer?” asked old McGregor, grasping Donald’s arm. “Are ye free, lad?”

“Yes, father.”

“And it was she herself which set ye free?”

“Yes.”

The old man burst into a roar of uncontrollable, heart-felt laughter. His joy was so great that he could not contain it.

CHAPTER VII—*Au Revoir*

THE Salle d'Attente was full, but Dr. Deladoey was neglecting his duties. He stood upon the doorstep of the Hotel, hat in hand, and the proprietor fumed from his bureau, for he had no power over the Specialist, who could keep every one of his visitors waiting if he chose, and, what was more, would do so if he saw fit, irrespective of every black look or muttered threat.

The McGregors came down, ready for their journey home, and the proprietor could only stand and stare—for Dr. Deladoey had jumped into the omnibus after them, in spite of his waiting patients in the Salle d'Attente. He was going to the station to see this family of no importance off! Such a thing had never happened before, even when members of the nobility had been here to undergo the Treatment.

“You go home—before Mademoiselle?” said the doctor, sitting beside Donald.

“I leave her—for you.”

Dr. Deladoey looked keenly at him, and then

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his face broke into smiles. "Sometimes a man may wish to talk to his wife," he murmured. But Donald did not hear.

"You are coming to the station with us, Moosyou, and you are busy?"

"Time is of no value to me," said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders.

The omnibus jolted over the round stones that pave the streets of Donvery. Donald looked out of the window to see the last of the old Château, and because he did not want to see that face beside him. They rattled on, and now they were in the Plage. They stopped—the station was reached.

Donald called a commissionnaire; he busied himself with the registering of luggage and buying of tickets; while the doctor conducted the old couple into the waiting-room, assuring them they had nothing to do except await the coming of the train. Then he went out on the platform, where he found Donald.

"Moosyou, you have saved my life."

"And you have given me that opportunity of making my fame which was my ambition," said the Specialist.

"I have no words to thank you," faltered Donald.

"That is well."

"But I cannot go away without saying some-

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thing—it is such a stupendous thing you have done. Yesterday, when I went to you for the last time, I was dumb. Moosyou, it was because my heart was speaking so loud that the power of speech deserted me. I would have said something—much—but I could not.”

“You always were fond of conversation, my friend; but now there is no time for this volubility—your train comes.”

“It is almost impossible to say good-bye,” said Donald, with trembling voice.

“Do not say it. Instead of that, promise me the satisfaction of some day again beholding my handiwork. There is no need of a word that signifies so long a parting. *Au revoir* has a meaning not so melancholy.” While he spoke, the Specialist was writing something in his pocketbook, which seemed to absorb more than two-thirds of his attention.

“It is over,” said Donald, drawing back as the train steamed in.

“Well over,” corrected the doctor.

“Moosyou, you are glad to see the last of me!”

“I have told you already, my friend, that it is my business to cure and to despatch. Having mended the machine, I pack it up and send it away. That is my life. It is a pleasant life; one that is full of interest, of some use to humanity, and profi-

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table. Ah, here are Monsieur and Madame. There is room in this compartment."

He stood at the step to help the old people in, then he mounted to stand on the platform of the carriage until the double bells should warn him off. He was tearing out the last written note from his pocketbook.

"Will you perform for me a small commission in London?" he asked Donald.

"Surely, Moosyou. We return that way."

"At this address you will discover my last directions for your full recovery. . . . Ah, there is no more time—but you will understand."

He sprang off the platform, and the train moved on. The man of all brain and no heart had supplied Donald with an address that told nothing—but it was the temporary address of Helen Lester.

For the last time little May Tempest went to the doctor for Treatment, and for the first time she went in alone.

"Mademoiselle is glad, delighted; I can see it in her looks, and in her smiles, and I—I am desolate."

"Did you think," asked May, laughing for joy, "that I was going to be sorry to say good-bye to you?"

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“My heart is all broken,” he rejoined, “and you who have broken it, rejoice.”

“But you are mistaken, Mussy, my heart is broken, too. There is nothing I like better in the world than the Treatment. I can hardly bear to think that the pleasures of this room are over.”

“Oh, no, not quite,” said he. “It would be such a pity to deny you one more, Mademoiselle, that I have reserved one for this morning.”

“Have you? I *am* glad—I mean, I should be—but unfortunately I have not time. I only ran in to say good-bye. I must go and help my uncle to pack his tracts, as Aunt Alice is not able—I am afraid her heart is broken, too. That is why she is not here to-day, and Uncle Edward would not come, either, as we are not just now on speaking terms. He went so far as to tell Aunt Alice, in my presence, that he *would not allow ME* to come. Otherwise I should not have dreamed of it.”

“Mademoiselle is never at a loss,” said the Specialist. “Maintenant!”

He pinned her down in the chair, and from the Specialist, when he chose, there was no escape. Once upon a time Mr. Derwent had prophesied that Dr. Deladoey would find his match in May, but Mr. Derwent was not always right.

“I hate this chair,” burst out May, finding her

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struggles futile. "I couldn't and I wouldn't allow you to touch me if it were not for the last time, the blessed, blessed last time. . . . Oh-h!"

"That did not hurt," grinned the doctor, hanging up his instrument.

"Yes, it did," wailed May.

He took her hand, and then she screamed—for he was examining the thumb. Until this moment she had borne daily torture rather than let his eye discover the mischief. But nothing could be hidden from the Specialist.

"Ha!" said he. "Why did you not let me before cure this poor little thumb?"

"Because, Mussyous," she gasped, trying in vain to extricate her hand from his grip, "because it is always like that. It was born so."

"Yes? Never mind, Mademoiselle, that defect of nature is not incurable. See, I do but touch it with the lancet, and it is cured!"

May screamed and writhed, and he put down the lancet with a chuckle.

"It is cured," he repeated, "and it was not terrible, was it, mon enfant?"

"Couldn't you think of something else to do to me?" she asked, in a tone of despair. "It is your last chance."

He laughed, and took her face between his hands, shaking his head at her. He felt delighted

Au Revoir

with May, now he knew that Donald was not going to undertake her.

"You will come back next year," he said, "for that is the way with all my patients, and then I will do many more things to you."

"Adieu," said May, shortly.

"But you will come back next year, so you must say 'Au revoir.' "

"A year is a long time," retorted May; "so long that I have a chance of dying before I come to you again, so I will say adieu, Mussyous, ADIEU."

"Au revoir, Mademoiselle," said he, "AU RE-VOIR."



PART VI
S E Q U O R



CHAPTER I—*In the Arms of the Eternal*

UP in a little châlet on the mountain side the mystery of another human life had been begun under every disadvantage that could well be thrust upon a new, poor atom of humanity. Deformed, diseased, fatherless, and nearly destitute, the tiny infant fought for its existence. It seemed conscious, too, of this cruel fate, for the weird little brow was deeply wrinkled, and the lips were drawn in lines of agony. Its voice, resembling the cry of a half-strangled kitten, was raised in protest against its cruel destiny. Over by the window the stout Swiss woman, who had constituted herself nurse, was rocking it and shaking it—a process that seemed the reverse of soothing.

There was something bitterly unfair to this poor infant in the circumstances of its birth. Why should it have been made so weak and ugly, with a mother whose extraordinary beauty seemed more marked than ever in contrast to the hideous deformity of her child? She lay there, with her face turned away—she could not bear the sight of her first-born.

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“They tell me that it is all right,” she whispered, hoarsely, turning round suddenly to speak to the Specialist. He stood beside her, his finger upon her pulse. “Just as if I could not see! I cannot endure to look at it. I want it to die at once, rather than live with such a frightful affliction.” Then she added, hurriedly: “Its life is in your hand; I freely trust you to do everything for it that human ingenuity can devise.”

“Madame, I am not God Almighty, to kill and to make live. I can only use what knowledge I have, and that is slight; it is a groping in the darkness.”

“What do you think of it, Monsieur? Has it any chance at all?”

“Madame, you have talked enough.”

Dr. Deladoey forgot his manners. He departed suddenly, without taking leave. His tricycle was below, and he rode it hard, for this châlet was out of the way. Down at Donvery he was in his element; up here in the solitude of mountain ways he was a stranger. He rode as if he feared to be alone amongst the hills.

Clutching the air with its witch-like claws, the poor little infant fought and struggled for its existence. Into an unfriendly, cruel world it had been thrust, with everything against it, and nothing to help it! One small atom, in battle with

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the Universe! The forces of this terrible universe came upon it, and after a time it ceased to protest, accepting its fate in silence. The old, old eyes of the poor atom stared mutely ahead, already learning the lesson of patience, and waiting with resignation for relief.

The Swiss woman howled and tore her hair. She rocked herself violently in her chair, and the châlet was filled with the sound of her lamentations. Had she lost her husband, or worse, her savings? Were her children drowned? Had the blight destroyed her fruit trees?

Such demonstrations were sufficient for any of these catastrophes.

Dr. Deladoey hissed a malediction through his lips as he sprang up the rickety stairs. It was most important to keep his patient calm and quiet. He called the woman sharply, and she appeared, a dead calm following. She stood at Mrs. Courtenay's door—she had been bawling in there—and for a moment the doctor was speechless. Then he recovered, and asked her in his most terrible tones why she was venturing to disturb the patient with her troubles. These seemed already to have disappeared, and she was able to answer cheerfully. It was nothing personal the matter with her, she informed him. She was only crying out of kindness for Madame Courtenay, who

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had not a tear, and it would be hard for the poor little baby to go to the Eternal unwept.

Dr. Deladoey stood motionless.

“It died this morning, Monsieur, after one terrible convulsion, and it is black round the mouth, a sight dreadful to behold, and though I put a five-franc piece on each eye, they are open now, staring.”

“And Madame?”

“Madame cares nothing. She neither speaks nor weeps. She took her gruel, and she asked for Monsieur.”

Dr. Deladoey swept the woman aside, but she followed him into the room, and stood waiting for an opportunity to recommence howling. The dead infant had been laid out on a small table near the window.

Dr. Deladoey folded his arms and stood waiting for Mrs. Courtenay to speak. They looked at each other.

Then she said: “Monsieur, I have given it no love, and it is better for the poor little thing to be dead.”

He went over to the table, and looked down at the dead child, now finished with its desperate battle. The tiny fists clenched tight seemed to express how furiously it had fought up to the end. Well, it was better to be safe in the arms

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of the Eternal than to be down amongst the agitations and despairs of life—occasionally it is well to know defeat.

“Madame,” said the Specialist, “God has had pity on your child.”

The Swiss woman came and blubbered out that it would have to be buried at once, as it would not keep, and her husband was making its coffin. With that she exploded into a roar, and the doctor took her by the shoulders and turned her out of the room. He said something forcible as he did so, which seemed to soothe her, and then he returned to his patient.

“In a few days, Madame, you can be moved, when I trust you will sojourn awhile in the hospital pension over my rooms, before leaving Donvery. I would wish to have you under my care a short time.”

“Oh, yes, take care of me,” she cried, and a sudden downpour of tears made her stammer; “I—I’m a widow, and lonely. Oh, Monsieur, God bless you for suggesting that you should take care of me a little longer. As soon as I get stronger I shall have to face the terrible, lonely world. It frightens me; I don’t even know what money I have, or how to get it.”

“We can do business when Madame is better able to attend to it.”

The Specialist

“Monsieur,” she exclaimed, with a sudden thought, “you are kind—kindness itself, but it won’t do. I cannot go to your hospital; I don’t know whether I shall have money enough to pay you.”

Dr. Deladoey stepped back, mortally offended.

“This subject must be mentioned, Monsieur,” she added, firmly, “and you must listen. I have been here a long time, how many weeks I do not know, and I have paid nothing, either to you, who have constantly attended me, or to the good woman who has cared for me. You must, you shall allow me to pay my debts. My husband would be angry if I did not. In that matter he was most particular.”

“Madame, I fear that I must hurry back to my patients.”

“No, no, do not go just yet.”

“I have no time to stay and argue.”

“Then we will not argue, but stay here just a few more minutes.” Her voice entreated him so earnestly that he halted. “Monsieur, I have wanted to consult you about my brain—I am afraid that something must be wrong with it.”

He came back to her side at once.

“Nothing is wrong with Madame’s brain.”

“I’m afraid it must be,” she returned. “Do you know, I have never loved my child? I think I

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am the only mother who ever felt aversion to her new-born infant, and so I know there must be something wrong with my brain."

"By no means, Madame; on the contrary, it appears to me unnatural that any woman should be able to bear affection to an infant so young." He glanced, with a slight shudder, over towards the baby.

"It suffered," she whispered, hoarsely, "and every time it moaned it seemed to accuse me, its mother."

"That was but imagination, Madame. It knew nothing of human relationships—it has escaped from all such complications."

"All the same, it was not right that it should be brought here to suffer and to die. . . . I know I ought to love it, for the sake of its father." She hid her face.

The Specialist answered nothing aloud, but presently, when she looked up, she saw a reply written plainly enough upon his countenance.

"Monsieur, my husband loved me once—he did, indeed."

"That is quite possible."

"And I gave him the whole of my heart. Monsieur, I wonder if you men know what we give up to marry you, or how utterly a woman must efface herself to be a wife?"

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“Alas! Madame, I have not had the experience that might teach me. And yet it appears to me that there is some mistake in this arrangement, that a woman should efface herself entirely. It is not my conception of marriage.”

“The only thing left to me now is to perform my husband’s wishes, and you must not thwart me, Monsieur. He would wish me to pay my debts.”

“Pay them, Madame,” snapped the doctor.

“The greatest is to you, and you have not told me what it is.”

“I will tell you, Madame, when you are in better health, and hope that you will then consent to pay it, but for the present it is useful to forget the troubles of business.”

“I cannot,” she exclaimed. “I lie here thinking, and I cannot avoid the fret and worry of money matters. I am so ignorant, for I was brought up to regard work as degrading, and was educated only with a view to marriage. I was taught to look upon that as the only womanly profession. See what a mistake it was! I know my husband’s income was a pension, so I fear—I fear that I am penniless.”

“Take each single day as it comes, Madame; it is sufficient.”

“But each day may be plunging me into further

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complications. I must not blind myself to these things. There must be heavy bills to pay."

"I presumed to undertake all these details of business, and have become Madame's single creditor, and she may choose her time for settling her liability (I think you call it)—as I am in a position that makes it possible to wait. If Madame would do me the favour of continuing her single creditor I would feel gratitude."

Mrs. Courtenay turned towards him, her eyes wide open with amazement. He was gazing at the ceiling, hiding whatever it was he really felt under an expression of ferocity enough to frighten almost anyone. She never ceased her fascinated stare.

"Madame, do me this small kindness; give me the happiness of finding myself in the situation of a friend." His eyes suddenly swept down from their fixed gaze upon the ceiling, and met her look of amazement, straight and piercing and commanding. There was not much entreaty in that imperial look.

"A friend!" she repeated, gasping.

"Your friend, Madame."

"Monsieur!"

"Then that is settled," he said.

A shuffling noise outside the door interrupted them. It burst open, and something bumped

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against the side. Dr. Deladoey turned sharply, and then stood closer to the bed, trying to conceal what was happening from Mrs. Courtenay.

"It's a poor coffin," said the Swiss woman, "badly made, just like André's doing, and it won't be a bit comfortable for the poor child."

Dr. Deladoey's face became awful, and the woman fell silent, quaking. She had brought in a neighbour to help her. The Specialist stood in the way so that Mrs. Courtenay should not see what they were about.

"There, it shall have a rattle with it," said one of them, placing a toy beside the tiny slumberer. It couldn't do it any harm, she said, and it seemed unkind to coffin it without ever a toy from the moment it was born until it was buried. Poor little object, it had not the expression that would make one think it cared to play!

"What is it? What are they doing?" cried Mrs. Courtenay. "Are they taking my poor baby away? Make them bring it here just one moment, Monsieur, I must kiss it. I have never kissed it yet."

"Madame, it is better that you should not harass yourself by looking again upon your infant. It will affect it not at all. The sentiments of earth do not follow to the eternal repose of those who have escaped from mortality."

In the Arms of the Eternal

While he spoke the women carried away their burden. It was easy enough to carry that tiny coffin.

The sound of a hammer smote upon their ears. Dr. Deladoey and his patient listened. Mrs. Courtenay lay back, holding her breath. The doctor leaned against the wall as if he needed its support. Then all was silent.

“Madame, God has had pity on your child.”

CHAPTER II—*The Name of Constance*

THE sunshine fell in one steady, glorious blaze upon the white Swiss houses, with their gaily painted contrevents. It was a radiant scene, almost too dazzling for eyes accustomed to England's softer shades. But there were not many English in Donverny now; they came with the Spring and departed with the Summer.

In a little sitting-room adjoining Donald McGregor's old bedroom, Mrs. Courtenay was resting in a bamboo armchair. She had been in Dr. Deladoey's hospital pension for about three weeks, and she had suddenly awakened to the fact that it was time to go. She had in her possession about fifty pounds, which the Specialist had rescued out of the wreck of her husband's affairs. She had not paid him yet, and she had nothing more upon which to live. Her mind was made up. She would return to America to-morrow. The thing must be done at once.

She heard the quick, light step of the doctor coming towards her room, and two red, burning spots of colour rose in her cheeks. It would not

The Name of Constance

be altogether easy to inform him of her resolution.

“How do you find yourself this afternoon, Madame?”

“I am better, Monsieur. I am well enough to go.”

Dr. Deladoey put his elbow on the mantelpiece, and rested his head upon his hand. One could see the veins stand out upon his forehead.

“It is hard to go,” she said, “leaving so much care and kindness. But I must.”

“Why must you? Why not stay here always?”

“Monsieur must know that that is impossible,” she answered, gently. Then she added: “You have my life-long gratitude for your disinterested and amazing kindness, which seems incredible when one remembers that I am a stranger and foreigner. You have added to this by making yourself my sole creditor, and giving me time in which to liquidate my debt to you. What you have done for me is written in heaven. Here, on earth, there is no reward for such deeds, because they belong to God.”

“What reward do we ask for doing that which gives us pleasure, Madame?” he asked. “If I assure you that the ability to serve you is the pleasure of my solitary life, you will understand that neither thanks—nor reward—are due, unless

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.... *the greatest of all rewards.*" The last words were inaudible.

"Ah, how kind you are!" she exclaimed. "If only it were in my power to make a return!"

"I will have no return, Madame. That is what I complain of against you Americans—a spirit commercial!"

"Monsieur, I will offer you no return. Forgive the Americans."

"The Americans are those whom I most admire," he said. His face was haggard as he looked down at her.

"Monsieur, you are tired."

"That is so—tired."

"But now you will sit down and rest? You can spare me a few minutes on my last day here?"

"Your last day, Madame?"

"I start for America to-morrow, Monsieur. My mind is made up. This must be my last day here."

"I trust, Madame, that it is not the last you will ever spend in Donvery. That would be a melancholy thought—to me."

"It is necessary to go," she answered.

"Unless you were content to stay, Madame—forever."

"You must see that that is impossible, Monsieur."

The Name of Constance

“Ah, yes, impossible.”

There was silence, and then Mrs. Courtenay trembled.

“Madame”—the voice of the Specialist seemed to come from a great distance—“you have married once. Dare I hope that you will ever find it possible to marry again?”

She went and leaned against the window-sill, sick to the heart. The doctor stood still, not stirring a muscle, even his breath seemed suspended.

“I am sorry,” she answered at last, in a voice so low that had he not possessed keen hearing he might not have caught her words, “that you could imagine it possible for me to marry again. I must be true to my name—Constance, constant—I can have no husband but the husband I have lost. My name is Constance.”

The sunshine lay in one steady, brilliant blaze of glory over the landscape, as if Nature mocked its enemy, man. The Specialist saw those beautiful eyes gazing out at the prospect; he heard the tones of that beautiful voice. That vision and that sound would remain with him long after they had passed out of his world visible.

“I trust I may be forgiven for the presumption of my question?”

She turned to him, and a great sob rose in her

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throat. Her husband had not been worthy of her faithful love—she knew it.

“Ah, Monsieur, how shall I ever forgive myself? Alas, alas! I have injured you! I, who owe you more than tongue can tell.”

“Madame has injured me in no way. It was a presumption to ask her such a question. But if Madame could have made another answer, if it should ever happen that she could bring herself to do so, it would be my joy to serve her with the rest of my poor life that is worth so little. But do not be troubled with the thought that you have caused me pain, my friend; it will be no different for me in the future than in the past. I have my work, and there is much of interest in this profession. I know none to compare with it, though I am sometimes pained by the sobriquet of ‘Butcher,’ which is what the English call me, while the French have given me a name—‘Bourreau’—which you would call Executioner.”

She looked into his face, and marvelled.

“And now, Madame, I must excuse myself. I will wish you a good-night before your journey.” He took her hand and looked down into the wonderful eyes, now luminous with tears.

“This day I may not have another opportunity of wishing you a good-night. In the evening I

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have an engagement which will necessitate my absence from this house. I will hope to attend Madame to the station in the morning."

At the door he suddenly stopped, and wheeled round.

"Madame, after you have departed, should you at any time feel disposed to return, there is always a room for you ready in this pension."

There was an interval of silence, deep and ominous.

"If at any time it should come into your mind, Madame, that you would wish to reward me for anything I have ever done to help you—or if there should be a day in your life when you require further assistance, it is my request to you, my most earnest request, that you will return."

Again silence—and the door closed.

CHAPTER III—*Chez-moi*

CHER MONSIEUR:
There, I will drop that, I can write
no language but my own.

My best of friends, this heart of mine is too full just now to say much (and you don't approve of too much conversation). It is beating still, however, thanks to your genius, and it is beating to the tune of rapture—also thanks to your genius. The best and most noble woman in the world has at last consented to marry me. I followed your final direction for my complete cure, but it took a little time, for you know what a fool I was in Donverry. That is over, with all traces of the disease you cured, and I am the only happy man extant. Her father is going back to India in a fortnight, when I and my wife will return to Scotland, to my old home there.

When shall I hear similar news from you? It is not good for a man to be alone. In my stupendous joy I should like to know that my best friend is as happy as

His very sincerely,

DONALD McGREGOR.

Chez-moi

Dr. Deladoey laid the letter upon his table. He took a turn or two up and down his room, then sat down to write his congratulations.

“I am overjoyed to hear of your good fortune, and offer my best wishes and salutations. I am married to my profession and have time for no other nuptials.”

That was enough, brief and to the point—the Specialist had no time to spare. He shut and stamped his letter with the rapidity of a conjuror, then he burst noiselessly out of his room to leave it on the table in the passage. Someone overhead was groaning, and he shrugged his shoulders impatiently. How badly some men endure! They cannot stand even bodily suffering! That was the voice of the peasant upon whom he had operated this morning. No doubt he was in pain, but he had no business to disturb the other patients. Nothing could be done to relieve him, it was a case requiring time—so the doctor wheeled round and shut himself into his apartments, where the unpleasant sound could not annoy him.

The cold and gloomy twilight of Winter had fallen. In his consulting room and the small waiting-room for patients the gas was lighted. It was an hour he was seldom disturbed. His rooms opened into each other, and he walked through

The Specialist

them all, pausing in the waiting-room to sniff suspiciously. He poured a little Condyl's fluid into a saucer, and set it under the sofa. Then he went into his consulting room, turned up the incandescent light, and examined a polypus he had extracted that day. For a few minutes the keen face was alight with interest.

But something ailed the Specialist. He could not concentrate his interest upon a polypus, though it was a remarkably fine specimen. He corked it up and put it in his cupboard. He would examine it some other time. A strange unrest drove him out of the room where he spent all the leisure moments of his life.

Next to it was his Salle-à-manger, now lighted only by a fainting wood fire. The white table-cloth, never removed, shone in the dim light. One chair—his—was at the table, the rest were arranged in monotonous order round the room.

He passed on to his useless Salon.

It was nearly quite dark here, for neither fire nor lamp was ever lighted. The contrevents had not been closed, so a reflection of snow-light made it possible to see where he was going. He stood for some moments in the middle of the chilly room.

Then he passed on, until he had made the circuit.

Chez-moi

“Chez-moi,” said the doctor.

He was back again in his consulting room, and once more took out the bottle he had put away. It had come into the mind of the Specialist that he had nothing to do with pride of house or family; he had his work, and he was studying a theory of his own with regard to polypi. For the good of his race he must work it out to demonstration. Men who are not specialists may indulge in the sentiments, but as for him!

What ailed him to-night? He started up from his specimen. He could not get rid of the depressing influence of those cold, dark rooms. On such a night, too, one could not help thinking of travellers out in the bitter cold. Well, it was always possible to change dark rooms into light and warm ones.

He hurried back to the Salle-à-manger and replenished the fire, not desisting until a roaring blaze shot up the chimney. And then he entered the empty Salon. Having lighted up the room, he indulged his fancy by making a fire here, too. It looked warm and cheerful at last, and then the doctor turned up every light in the flat.

He had now dispelled the gloom, and he began walking up and down, surveying his work, and adding improvements as they occurred to him.

The muffled sound of wheels rolling upon snow-

The Specialist

came to his ears, and someone was knocking at his door. He went out and threw it open himself. One must not deny hospitality to travellers on such a night.

“Monsieur—is there certainly a room for me in the pension above?”

“I believe so, Madame,” he answered. “The same which you occupied in the Summer. You have just arrived? I fear it has been a cold journey for you, Madame. You must come into my Salon and get warm, while they make ready for you above. Your rooms have been waiting for you, Madame, about five months.”

Mrs. Courtenay, trembling—perhaps with cold—looked timidly at him. She had been away about five months.

He led her to the Salon, and she stood warming herself and hiding her face.

“Madame has come back? In this way she has answered my letter? I have been waiting—expecting—see!” He waved his hand to indicate the preparations he had made.

“Monsieur—I told you my name was Constance—but, oh, that cannot be true—I must have another name.”

“Perhaps I might be able to supply you with another, Madame?”

She uncovered her face, and gazed before her.

chez-moi

“I am not faithful to the memory of my husband; I am not constant, after all.”

“That is good news to me,” murmured the Specialist.

“It was his fault—his own fault,” she faltered. “He would not give me even one kind word—and you, Monsieur, a stranger, had time out of your busy life”

“Time is of no consequence to me,” broke in the Specialist.

She paused, and the beautiful eyes shone with tears.

“Monsieur, I must make some return—such amazing kindness cannot go unrewarded.”

“Eh bien, Madame,” said he, briskly; “reward me.”

“There is none great enough.”

“There is one, Madame, the greatest of all.”

The Specialist had not asked too much.

THE END



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